

AURIEL AND OTHER STORIES

By

RUTH ELLIOTT





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RUTH ELLIOTT,

AUTHOR OF 'JOHN LYON,' 'UNDECEIVED,' 'JAMES DARYLL,' 'A VOICE
FROM THE SEA,' 'TALKS WITH THE BAIRNS,' ETC., ETC.



LONDON :

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T. WOOLMER, 2, CASTLE-STREET, CITY-ROAD, E.C.;

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'MY PRECIOUS BOY!' MURMURED THE MOTHER.—*See page 10.*

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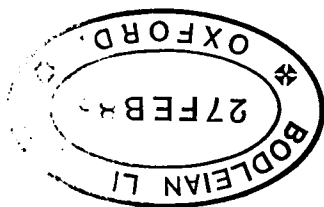
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AURIEL.

CHAPTER I.



WOULD be a soldier, and lay down my life for my country! I would dash to the rescue when all seemed hopeless, and turn the tide of battle against the foe. I would die a hero, and my name should be sung, and praised, and loved. That is what I would choose,' said Hugh, tossing his books across the table, and stretching out his long limbs.

'And I would be a sailor, and dare the dangers of the deep! I would ride on the storm, dive into the world of waters, and find out the secrets of the sea. I would sail into sunny climes, and into the snowy regions of the north. I would discover the undiscovered, and make my name famous and immortal by bestowing it upon some fair, fresh Arcadia,' said Eric, waking up from a dream of a beautiful future.

‘And I would be an artist, and set the world talking of my glorious pictures! I would paint the Madonna—my sweet lady—as she has never been painted yet! I would teach the canvas to speak, and my own mother’s dear eyes should teach me the secret of the painter’s language. Mother, if I could transfer the liquid depth and sweetness of your eyes to my canvas, I should be an artist,’ said Claud, the beauty-loving, tearing his paper, and throwing it in the fire, with an impatient gesture of discontent. ‘I can see what I want to do, but I cannot do it. There are the lights and shades, but when I touch them with my pencil, one would think I was playing with the poker!’

The boys laughed, and leaving the table, drew round the fire. The mother passed her hand caressingly over a fair head resting on the pillow of the couch, by which she sat, while her eyes wandered proudly over the strong, handsome faces of her stalwart boys. Hugh, with his father’s fearless bearing and daring spirit; Eric, the indomitable, with the love of adventure and discovery, deep in his very nature; Claud, the dreamer, with his beautiful artist face, and his worship of all that is lovely and worshipful.

‘And I would be a hero, too,’ said a low voice from the shadowed couch. ‘I would lay down my life, but not in battle. I do not care to be sung in song, nor praised by the world. I do not want to paint my mother’s eyes—they are painted on my heart already. I would spend my life in spreading the

light and life of the Bible. I would take the Gospel to the outcasts and forsaken. I would carry Christ's love for my banner, and win for it victory in all the dark places of the earth. Mother, I would lay down my life to make the world see Him as He is !'

The low voice was full of pathos and sorrowful yearning, and the mother's eyes filled with tears as she stooped and kissed the blue-veined forehead. This was her youngest, and perhaps dearest ; her gentle, uncomplaining, suffering boy, around whom were bound the tenderest cords of love.

She only knew how hard it was to lie and listen to the bold, ambitious dreams of his strong young brothers ; to hear their hopes and fears, their plans for the active future. She only knew how the proud spirit chafed beneath the weight of suffering and weakness which imprisoned his restless youth. She only knew and understood the yearnings of the strong, yet weary boyish heart to be up and doing in the world's wide strife.

'I must be a soldier, mother. I have loved my father's sword ever since he placed my baby hands upon the hilt, and bade me never bring the stain of dishonour upon the fair fame of his unsullied name. And I never will !' said Hugh, his clear, decisive tones ringing through the quiet room. 'Mother, I promise you—I give you my word of honour as a soldier and a gentleman—that no taint of disgrace shall touch you through your eldest boy.'

'And I, too,' cried impetuous Eric. 'I give you my sacred promise, mother. Never shall shadow of

dishonour or shame fall on you through me. I will try to make you proud of your sailor boy. I will seek to bring you honour and renown.'

'And what am I to say?' said Claud, his deep violet eyes brilliant with the light and inspiration of love and genius. 'I cannot carve my name upon my country's heart with the sharp edge of a tried and trusted sword. I cannot lead my gallant vessel among the dangers of undiscovered seas, and spread our trade and commerce, and add to England's wide dominion. But I will win you something, mother dear. If I can but work out my dreams, the time shall come when all the world shall throng to see the beautiful faces on the canvas of Claud, your artist boy; and some one shall be there to whisper, "He drew his inspiration from his mother's face." And mother, I too promise you that your boy's fame shall be as pure as his artist dreams.'

'There is nothing for me to do!' whispered the sweet voice from the couch, tremulous, and choked by a rising sob. 'I am the only one of your boys, mother, who can bring you nothing. I cannot even lift my father's sword! The sunlight on the glistening wave dazzles my weary eyes, and the close atmosphere of Claud's studio makes me faint and ill. Are some lives destined only to suffer and to die?'

'My precious boy!' murmured the mother, bending over the couch with an aching heart, and eyes so full of truest, tenderest sympathy that the sufferer felt his burden lightened. 'No life is destined only to suffer and to die! To each is given some

high and noble mission. To one is given heroic toil and strife on the battle-field of action ; to another the patient upholding of the Cross through pain and weary suffering. Not to the strong only does He confide His precious things. The brown hands of Hugh and Eric are not more fit for the work He has given them to do, than are Claud's white slender fingers for their allotted task ; and my Auriel's life-mission may be a higher and loftier one than either. It is by the strong of heart, and not by the strong of hand, that the victory is won.'

'And Auriel,' said Claud, dreamily gazing into the glowing embers ; 'the impulse may be greater than the action : the thought than the deed. Hugh and Eric and I are like young eagles, springing into the glorious morning air, and lifting our ambitious heads toward the dazzling sun. The first impulse of our life is to reach the dizzy heights of fame, but I know how deceptive is the mirage of gratified ambition. Even across my happiest dreams comes the shadow of misgiving ! Mother, if I fail it will break my heart.'

The boy's earnest soul spoke in the last passionate words, and half ashamed of the unwonted emotion, he dropped his head upon the couch, shading his face from the flickering blaze.

'To fear a failure is to court it,' said Hugh, proudly. 'If we are eagles, our pinions will carry us to the heights. I, for one, will not acknowledge failure possible. Say thou likewise, Eric and Claud.'

'I know what Claud means : the feeling comes

over me at times, but I hurry it away,' said the young sailor, tossing his sunburnt locks from his bronzed forehead. 'I, too, would reach the sun.'

'The Sun of Righteousness is *my* sun,' whispered Auriel, his transparent fingers straying lovingly among Claud's fair curls. 'I can reach no other. Nay, at times I cannot reach Him! The shadow and darkness fall on me as well as on you, Claud. The clouds hide my sun, even as they do yours. But our suns are different.'

There was silence in the room. It was the eve of separation, and the brave young hearts were subdued and softened, and filled with loving, tender regrets. The wide world lay before them, and they were eager for the veiled, and therefore beautiful, mystery of life. The sunny shores of the future stretched away into an endless vista, over which hung rosy clouds of hope and faith. They believed that the world was a vast and unknown universe, full of rich treasure for the bold adventurer. Fame, renown, wealth, and honour lay within reach of the brave and true, and their hearts throbbed with the exultation and fire of youth.

But though brave and true, they were also tender and true. They were leaving behind them, it might be for years, the home of their happy, careless childhood. In that very room they had learned their first lessons, earned their first reward and punishment. It was hallowed and made sacred by memories of the dead father, who had taught them from their earliest years to reverence the good and true.

Every spot in the old home was rendered dear by some association. The shady garden, the orchard with its gnarled old trees, the pasture land beyond, were all endeared by a thousand recollections; and not one of the brothers could lightly say farewell.

But even this was small compared with the separation from their gentle mother, whose tender words of counsel had preserved them from many a boyish fall. They had each some vivid memories of tears and repentance. Hugh, with his flashing eye and stormy temper; Eric, with his impatient heart and resistless will; Claud, with his eager stretching out towards only the beautiful, ignoring the oft-time plainer and less attractive path of duty. Memories both sweet and bitter.

And Auriel; words failed when the brothers spoke of him. Was this farewell to be the last? They dared not rest their thoughts on such a coming home. Dear as was each to the other, *he* was dearer still; dearer and more sacred. There was an element in their love for him, wanting in the usual type of brotherly love. He was beyond them and above them. Purer in heart and life; higher in motive, more spiritual in word and thought. Auriel, the peacemaker, whose grieved, appealing look had checked the bitter, harsh, half-spoken word. Auriel, the sympathiser, whose ready smile had ever answered smile. Auriel, the suffering, whose sweet patience had oft-times shamed their boyish petulance, and calmed their restless moods. Yes, he was infinitely dear to all; but it was Claud who loved

him most. Strong and daring, full of buoyant life, Hugh and Eric found in each other a prized companionship; while Claud's more finely-strung, sensitive nature clung to the ideal of *spirituelle* beauty which discipline had perfected in Auriel.

With aching hearts and clasped hands the little group sat late into the night. As in old childish days, the low seats were drawn close to the mother's chair, and the brown hands stole into hers, and Claud's fair head rested against her knee.

'I will remember your promises, my sons, and cherish them as my most precious treasures,' she said, striving to steady her faltering voice. 'How precious, no words of mine can tell you! I know you will be brave and true. I trust my boys. I would but ask you one thing—one more promise. When the rays from the sun you seek—the sun of fame—are round you, do not let their radiance hide the purer light shed by the Sun of Righteousness. The sun which Auriel seeks. I understand your misgivings, my Claud: if in the future they come upon you, making your heart faint and sink within you, turn your eyes to that light which alone has power to dispel the clouds and shadows gathered round us by this world's illusive promises. There is much that is beautiful in life; much to make you glad. But the sun you seek, my boys, has no lasting light. It is meant only for time, and you for eternity. Will you seek also that other Sun?'

'Mother,' said Claud, breaking the silence which followed her words, 'I cannot promise to seek it now.'

I dare not promise, for I fear my power to fulfil. Let us try what life will bring before we promise.'

'Yes,' cried Hugh, impatiently. 'Trust us, mother, we will not dishonour you; and as for the rest, it will come in time—when we have outlived the fire of youth, and settled down into the calm of age. We will give you an answer then.'

The mother sighed, but passed to other themes. Dear beyond price were the passing moments, and the clocks had ushered in the early morn before the last good-night was said.

CHAPTER II.

YEARS passed, and once more the old home rang with the sound of laughter and happy voices.

Proud, and calm with a depth of thankful joy, the mother moved among her stalwart sons. No longer boys, with the soft down of youth upon their lips, but strong and bearded men.

Hugh and Eric, brown as the hardy Vikings of old; broad-shouldered and deep-chested Claud, bronzed by a southern sun, with a fair, silky moustache shading the sweet, sensitive mouth, and with a depth of expression in his violet eyes, deeper even than his boyhood had promised.

All of them, with somewhat of strangeness in face

and speech, with a nameless grace of manhood, an ease and grave courtesy born of inbred self-respect, right noble sons, for whom a mother's heart did well to throb with pride.

And Auriel was there, too. Years of pain and suffering had still more etherealised the beautiful chiselled features, till it seemed as if they needed but one touch to make them perfect with the high beauty of the redeemed above. The pure spirit, chastened into loving submission, shone through the large dark eyes, and the impress of a peace beyond all human knowledge was upon the high white brow.

There was much to tell and hear; much to wonder at, to be thankful for. Strange stories of adventures by land and water: of dangers passed and difficulties overcome. Stories of men's passions and crimes; of revenge and vengeance; of reward and punishment.

Under the burning sun of India's skies Hugh had nobly played his part, and won the long-coveted renown. He had fought and won; victory had followed in his footsteps, and the gallant young officer was praised and loved, even as he dreamed in his boyhood's days.

'And did you never shrink when in the midst of the battle?' asked Claud, as he lay and listened at his mother's feet, his old accustomed place. 'What were your feelings when you heard the bullets whizzing round?'

'Not pleasant at first, but one gets used to such

things,' was the careless answer. Not careless from affected ease, but with the real indifference of the true soldier.

'And you are well content, my son?'

'Yes, mother; content with the life, not with myself or what I make of it as yet.'

'Is not the wine sweet at the top?' said Claud, with meaning in his voice. 'Have you, too, found a taste of dregs about even the first rich draught?'

'Ah! I am wiser than I was,' said the soldier, with a sigh. 'I do not expect to find a perfect draught: the lees will taste. Life is stirring and entrancing, but every now and then there comes a break, a void, a sense of something wanting. Do you remember, Eric, when we thought life so grand and glorious? It needs but years to undeceive. Men are not what they seem. I am weary of the world's trickery and meanness.'

'Trickery and meanness in the camp!' said Claud. 'Nay, then, if our bold, bluff soldiers cannot play the man, who can? I thought deceit and meanness reigned in courts and palaces, among courtiers, and the silken-slippered tribe. I, too, have learned somewhat of the world's ways; its petty cares and jealousies. My enemies are more than I can count, for our noble profession cultivates the art of calumny, and will not even allow a man the credit of the work of his own right hand. They say that Christiferne gave the finishing touches to my Monica!'

'What!' cried Eric, his dark eyes flashing. 'Dare they even whisper such a falsehood!'

‘Whisper! my brother. Nay, if they were content with whispering, it would not matter much,’ said Claud, gaily, throwing off with effort the cloud which for the moment had settled on his face. ‘Unfortunately they trumpet forth their evil hints and innuendoes, and spread a calumny with the virtuous air of one who does men service. My Monica must live the slander down.’

‘Not even artists, then,’ said Auriel’s gentle voice; ‘not even artists are all your boyhood hoped and trusted. In the beautiful world of imagination and creative art you believed the highest ideal of life was found. Is it not so, my Claud?’

‘I do not complain. The world is full of good and bad, and men must be tried before they are trusted. I will prove myself true, and the world shall hold me so. Go where I will, men speak of me, and from the best I take the best. They, the good men and true, believe in me, and prophesy great things from the promise of my past and present. I shall yet win the heights, and compel the reluctant homage of all who, having genius, recognise its mark.’

‘They must, they shall recognise it!’ said Eric, impetuous as of old. ‘I know the world, with its grudging praise, meted out by miser hands! But they will do you justice one day, Claud. I heard men speak of you to-day—I sauntered into the gallery and stood beside your picture and listened. Crowds stopped to gaze, and one spoke of the artist. “He is a dreamer,” he said, “one of the true in-

spired brotherhood. He is an artist; genius speaks upon his canvas. He is no dauber, degrading art, and seeking to lower her to the level of his own ideal." And then another spoke, and reminded me of the past: "They say his Monica is his mother. Her eyes are homes of silent prayer. Happy mother." What more they said I could not hear.'

Happy mother! Her eyes were homes of love and gladness then, as she drank in the praises of her boy.

'And yet I am no hero,' said Claud, playfully. 'We set that goal before us, and Eric is the only one yet who can claim the name. Come, talk of yourself, Eric, and tell us what we long to hear.'

There was no spirit of exultation in the tale so simply told. It was a tale of dangers innumerable, of stern self-sacrifice and heroic toil. But Eric told it as if it were but a record of simplest daily duty. True courage and true modesty go hand in hand.

He told how the little party of picked men had been sent to fight their way through snow and storm to the distant fort. How they had been lost in the wild North Land, losing every trace and track of human life. How one after the other had succumbed and sunk into a snowy grave, till only he and one more lived.

'And at last he, too, gave way,' said Eric, grave and saddened by the memory. 'I did my best to keep him up, but he was not so strong as I, and we had eaten nothing for so long. He fell, and then I took him up and staggered on. The snow was

blinding, and so deep! I gave myself up, then, mother!’

‘And then?’ said Hugh, impatiently.

‘And then I fell and rolled down a ravine. Even when falling I held on to Stacy. I wonder how I did it. We rolled over each other, and landed safely at the bottom. I found a post there, set up as a landmark by the company, and saw that I was only a few miles from the fort. It was no joke to carry poor Stacy there. He was a heavy weight. I could not get him to the door—nor myself.’

‘What did you do?’

‘Sank into the snow and thought of you all—my mother and Auriel first. Then I shouted, and fortunately some one heard.’

‘It was a hero’s act,’ cried Claud, his deep eyes full of enthusiasm. ‘No wonder that your name is honoured. Brave Hugh and gallant Eric! I am proud of my noble brothers!’

‘And I of mine,’ said Eric, smiling.

‘And I of mine,’ said Hugh.

‘And I—I thank God for my brothers,’ whispered Auriel. There was no trace of bitterness in face or tone, but there was something which roused and chained attention.

‘Let me speak now,’ he said, laying his transparent hand on Eric’s curls. ‘It is sweet to listen to all you have done and dared, and to know that the world honours my brave, true brothers. I lie and dream of it by day and night; it is my pride and pleasure. But through it all there runs a sorrowful

chord. While you are winning fame, and working out your chosen path, my work lies waiting for a stronger hand than mine. I do not mean my own especial personal work—such as that is I try to do it. I mean the work I love and cherish—to which my heart goes out with passionate longing. When Hugh speaks of the sin and crime among which he daily moves, of the passions and unholy thoughts and deeds of men around him, it makes me thrill with indignation that the name of Christian should be so defiled.'

'There is a leaven of good,' said Hugh, gently.

'I know it,' answered Auriel. 'I thank God there are some to fight for Him. You, my brother, would put down immorality and crime; but why? Not from allegiance to my Captain. Would to God my Sun were yours, Hugh! It is hardest to bear when the work I covet with all my heart's fervour is unprized by you. You have the opportunity—I, the unconquerable will.'

'It is ever so,' said Eric, gloomily. 'That which we covet is scorned by those who have possession.'

'And you, Eric,' said Auriel. 'You speak of the wild, untutored savage. He is an object of curiosity—nothing more. To me he is an uncut jewel, which perhaps my hand might polish for the Temple. If I could but reach him!'

'And what of me?' said Claud. 'What can I do, Auriel?'

Auriel smiled into the eyes which looked into his, so full of wistful sympathy and love, and replied,

‘It is the aim of the highest art to reach the heart. Your ideal is not below the highest. But how can you reach it? There is a depth in every human heart which only the Divine can touch. All else fails in hours of darkness or mental depression. Reach that if you can, Claud.’

‘Not with my art. I love her—my life is hers: but her power fails. Auriel, your sun has a surer light than ours.’

‘Then take it too,’ cried Auriel, flushed and eager. ‘Take it, and do double work, Claud. Do my work too!’

But Claud shook his head. ‘It is not my vocation. My *rôle* is not to play the mentor.’

‘It need not be. You do not understand me. O, Claud! can there be anything more beautiful than such an ideal as mine? A sinless world!’

‘Utopia! Nay, Auriel, your dreams are too spiritual for earthly realization. You are more of heaven than earth; you must not judge our coarser clay.’

A look of intense pain crossed Auriel’s face.

‘Do not speak lightly of it, Claud! If you knew how far I am from heaven you would not joke. We shall soon part again, and this time I feel we shall never more all meet in this world. I must speak that which is in my heart! Let me Claud, and Hugh, and Eric.’

There was no resisting the pleading of the low, sweet voice, and the brothers listened in silence.

‘I will not keep you long; I know the subject

is not so near and dear to you as it is to me. Forgive me if I weary you. Now that I am nearing the end of life, I shrink from the thought that not one of our name takes a bold stand against the tide of sin and shame which is forever sweeping over our beautiful world. I do not ask you to give up your work. I do not ask you to dedicate your life to this; but, O, Claud, Hugh, and you, dear Eric, will you for the sake of these strengthless hands of mine do something in the strife? Will you at times, when opportunity serves, draw back the veil of ignorance which hides the pure light of my sun, and let its rays fall on the dark haunts of sin? Will you—for my sake? Is it too much to ask?’

‘Auriel, I dare not promise!’ whispered Claud. And his grave eyes gathered tears as he met his brother’s searching gaze.

‘And you, Eric, and Hugh?’

‘I cannot promise that, Auriel; it is too much!’ said Hugh, with the old impatience.

And Eric shook his head.

With a sigh of bitter disappointment Auriel sank back upon the couch.

CHAPTER III.

AGAIN years passed, and Claud, the artist, sat once more beside the worn old couch on which, as in days gone by, Auriel reclined. With hand clasped in

hand the brothers sat, regardless of the waning light. They were not much changed : a little older-looking, a little sadder perhaps. And over Auriel's face, a calm and waiting stillness or expectancy appeared.

The mother, with snowy hair, passed to fro, preparing for the unexpected guest. And when at last she ceased and took her place beside her boys, they welcomed her with smiles, which told her more than words.

‘I have not heard from Hugh or Eric for months. I hope they treat you better, mother,’ said Claud, stroking her hand in the old fond way. ‘They are bad correspondents.’

‘Not to Auriel and me. But it is long since we heard. Were it not that ill news travels fast, I should be anxious. And you, my son, you have much to tell. Even in our quiet secluded home we hear of Claud the artist,’ replied the mother, striving to hide the glow of loving pride which thrilled and trembled in her voice.

Again the boyish flush, and toss of the wavy hair, so characteristic of the truthful ingenuous nature.

‘Ah, mother, fame is dear for your dear sake! I would rather see that look in your sweet eyes than hear the plaudits of admiring worlds. Life is pleasant—at times intoxicating. I love its stir and energy. I love to be successful. And yet I pine and long to turn from all, and rest in the quiet haven of the dear old home. But I have much to tell you—much for you, especially, Auriel. I would not speak of it in letters; I wished to wait.’

The musical voice sank and softened, and a shade of reverence rested on the thoughtful face. For some minutes no sound broke the silence, save the flicker of the flames, or the fall of embers in the grate.

‘Years ago we sat in this same room—Hugh, and Eric, and ourselves. We were talking of the future, and building lofty castles in the air. Do you remember, Auriel? We spoke of turning our faces sunward, and soaring upward like young eagles. You, too, spoke of your sun—the Sun of Righteousness. Like many boys, we shunned the theme so dear to you, and though we readily gave our promise to our mother to maintain unstained the family name, we would not promise to blend with our earthly sun the light from yours. We met again, when years had sobered and calmed down the fire of youth. Each had something to tell of gallant deed or hard-won honour. It was hard for you to lie and listen. My heart ached for you, my Auriel, as it had often done before. And then you asked one thing of us. Do you remember?’

A silent movement of the head gave answer, and the thin hand tightened its clasp.

‘And we refused! Even I, who knew you best! I have bitterly repented. But you little know how firm a hold the world can take upon a heart uncitadelled. I went back to Rome and lost myself in art. I resolved to paint the dream of my boyhood—a saintly, sweet Madonna. Far and wide I searched for an ideal face—a face of *spirituelle* purity and perfect beauty. It was the expression that I dreamed

of, but could not find. I wanted one of those rare girlish faces, with the seal of Paradise upon their unsullied brows. No easy thing to find! the stain of earth will cling so easily. I grew weary of the fruitless search. Faces sweet and pure were there, but not one with the look I have seen so often in your eyes, Auriel, and in my mother's. And then I wondered why it was, and where it came from; but I did not wonder long. I recognised the light and radiance of your sun. Faith, and trust, and hope, rays of Divine light, and the spotless purity of Paradise!

‘Deep in my heart was the memory of words which you perhaps have forgotten. It is the aim of the highest art to touch the heart. Ah, you have not forgotten! It haunted me, and I tried to solve the mystery of religion's power. Why did it raise and ennoble, refine and purify? Why were the rays from the Sun of Righteousness more satisfying and enduring than the light of the sun of fame? I was dissatisfied and weary. The world owed me more than it could pay. I had given it my best heart's life and energy, and it had cast me a handful of praise and flattery. Sick and tired, I threw aside my brush, and went, as you know, into foreign lands. Auriel, I cannot tell you all; I cannot even now recall, without a thrill of agony, the history of that one week. I have already told you something; not much. For seven long days I was alone in that frightful desert, lost! the fiery rays of the sun burning my life-blood! O, the unspeakable anguish of

thirst ! I will pass it over, only saying this—that I learned then the comparative value of success and fame. What were they to me in the presence of the highest need ? I wanted the light of your sun then, Auriel. I came back to Italy, and found my ideal in a wayside cottage. It was all I could wish, and I stayed and studied it. There was an old man there, too, her grandfather, blind and lame and weak. He always came and sat beside her, and she talked to him gently, as to a little child. At first it annoyed and irritated me ; but soon I found myself listening and sometimes putting in a word. She began to appeal to me at last, asking me many things which puzzled her sweet simple mind. And I tried to fashion my words like yours, Auriel ; I tried to answer as you would have done. And then came the thought, “Take Auriel’s work ; do as he would do if he were here. It is but right and fair that you in your health and strength should help him in his chosen work. He cannot do it ; you can. Do it for him.” And, Auriel, I did it. Day by day I spoke such words as touched the old man’s heart ; and he told his neighbours, and brought them in to listen. At last I left the village, but my work, or rather yours, had taken hold upon me. It was ever on me to be up and doing something for Auriel’s sake. Whenever I came across one of those simple, uncultured minds, ready to receive the first gift of the first passer-by, I could not refrain from pouring into it the story of the Sun of Righteousness. I became known at last, and the world said that art had turned

my brain. They called me the artist-colporteur, and scoffed and laughed at the wild vagary. Artists are privileged, you know! but they must not go too far in *that* direction! And so the months passed, and insensibly my own work blended with yours. Art and religion clasped hands, and my ideal rose into the pure heights of the Divine. Far away, beyond the dimmed radiance of the sun of fame, shone the ethereal light of the Sun of Righteousness, and now having once seen it, my eyes can never rest content below. Can you trust your work to me, Auriel, my brother?’

But no words could come from the trembling lips. The realized hope of so many weary years was more than the feeble strength could bear. It seemed as if the flickering flame of life had struggled on in lingering hope, and now had nothing left to keep it up.

All night the mother and brother kept vigil beside the bed. The beautiful eyes watched their every movement, and smiled a last farewell. Speech there was none, till morning broke; then the rays of the rising sun unsealed the dying lips.

‘It is easy to die! I can leave it all now! You are the first, Claud, and I take it as promise of all—of Hugh and Eric. I give my work to you, and them; but I must go and find that which is waiting me above. O, God! how my heart pants to be up and doing! There is strength and life for me at last! Power and energy! And my years here have not been useless—not quite wasted!’

There was yearning questioning in the quiet face—earnest beseeching.

‘My precious son! a pure and sainted life cannot be wasted! nor useless!’ murmured the mother, smoothing the fair hair from the cold damp forehead. ‘You know not what your work has been; you know not what your sweet influence has done. My patient, suffering boy! the seal of God’s love is on your very face.’

‘And He is ending my long probation! Thank Him for me, mother.’

It was hard! how could the mother’s breaking heart echo the gladness of the entranced spirit? How could she give thanks?

‘I am going to begin my life at last! My real life! Claud, I shall do my own work there! Is not the thought glorious! Ah, you know not how it thrills me with rapture. The chains are loosening fast, and I shall soon throw off these fetters which bind me to a sufferer’s couch! Mother! Claud! I cannot speak the joy—the rapture!’

Flooding the room with golden light the sun rose higher in the heavens; but the radiance in the deep blue eyes was from no earthly sun.

Pure and spiritualised into ethereal beauty the calm face took the silent touch of death, and they knew that he was gone.

He was dead! Auriel, the tender and true! In the distant camp, amid a savage soldiery of lawless natives, a stern-browed man bowed head and heart beneath the blow. He had expected it, had dreaded

it for years ; but it fell none the less heavily now. In the silent watches of the night he paced beneath the shadow of the trees, brooding over the long, long past. Vividly there rose before him scene after scene, in which Auriel ever held his place. He was the centre : round him the others hovered with uncertain aim. He was always the same ; always with his steadfast eyes fixed upon the Sun of Righteousness. Disciplined into purity and holiness, his face bore ever the impress of the worker's hand. God's seal was upon him.

'And I refused his last request ! . Yet how could I grant it ?' he murmured. 'What was his sun to me ? Less then than now, and that is little enough, God knows ! I could not do his work.'

It was no time of quiet peace ; the air was full of threats and ominous murmurs. There was no leisure for thought ; prompt action was the order of the day. The toil of battle soon absorbed all energy, but Auriel's memory was fresh and sacred. The homeward mail bore with it a few hurried words of sorrow, grief, sympathy, but they told nothing of the inward bitterness. There was a sting in his grief, the remembrance of his impatient denial of Auriel's last request.

The mutiny spread : on every hand the treacherous natives threw off the long-worn disguise. The earth was stained with blood : not that of men only, but of innocent women and defenceless children.

First and foremost, in gallant deed and daring, Hugh took his place. The very sight of the noble

head, towering high amid the ranks, gave courage to the despairing, strength to the well-nigh defeated. At a smile from him the children ceased to weep, and frantic mothers crowded round him with their little ones, beseeching him to save such precious lives.

Amid such scenes as these the change that gradually came over him passed unheeded. The cold, stern face lost its repellent gloom, and gathered a new light of gentle sympathy. His men no longer feared him; unless, indeed, a coward's conscience lashed them into fear. He was their friend: they trusted him, and gloried that he was theirs. True, gallant soldier, and noble gentleman!

But when, in the fearful heat, the fever came and laid them low, they learned to know him better, and then they saw the change, and wondered. Patient and gentle as a woman, he waited on the sick and dying. Braving death itself, he breathed the fever-tainted air, giving help and comfort to the weary sufferer.

What sort of comfort? Such as Auriel would have given? Yes; it had come to that at last! With eager eyes the fever-stricken watched and waited for his coming. His very presence gave rest; they hung upon his words, and drank in the music of his voice.

‘Unto you shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings!’

Such was his text, and as he bent, with tender words of love, and hope, and faith, over the tired, home-sick sufferer, a silent dedication prayer went up, ‘for Auriel’s sake!’

CHAPTER IV.

HOMeward bound! Simple words, but full of music to the tired wanderer. The young sailor-boy whispered them to himself, and fell asleep with a smile upon his lips as he pictured all they meant. Home, father, mother, companions! And in his dreams he saw and heard the welcome waiting him.

Happy boy!

The gray-haired wanderer in foreign climes trembled and shook as the whisper fell upon his ear, and sleep forsook his aching eyes. For him arose the picture of the empty homestead, the silent rooms, the wreck of 'long ago.' He saw the green mounds in the grass-grown, shadowed churchyard, and tears swept down the furrowed cheeks.

Upon the quiet deck a stately figure paced with slow and measured tread.

It was a night of star-light beauty; serene and still. Far away, on every hand, stretched the resting sea, the gentleness of heaven brooding over it. It was a night to stir the depths of memory, and rouse the slumbering echoes of the past. Sounding! ever sounding! That voice, whose tones had long been silent in the grave, now spoke again. Sweet and low, yet thrilling every listening nerve.

There was the old home, with its quaint gables and latticed windows. There was the dark, wainscoted library, upon whose sombre walls the firelight played such flickering fantasies. And there the couch, and a fair, sweet face, with eyes of patient

waiting—eyes that haunted. There the brothers—Hugh, the brave soldier; Claud, the successful artist. There the mother, with her saintly face and silvered hair. And there, in the old arm-chair, the bronzed sailor himself—Eric.

Vividly the picture rose before him, till he forgot the world of waters which lay between his native shore and him. It was many years since they had so met and greeted, and again parted with a long farewell! So many, that the world itself seemed gray, and old, and seared, with an autumn dreariness upon its face. Years of toil and hardship, success and failure, joy and deepest sorrow. Life had not failed to teach its saddening lessons, and the grave eyes and resolute lips told how they had been learned.

Swiftly through the phosphor-lighted waves the gallant ship pursued its homeward course. Not till the day had dawned did Eric cease his restless walk, and seek the peace of sleep.

But even in his dreams he followed on the same train of thought. He saw the lighted windows, and heard the merry voices of 'the boys' within. He was a boy again, with boyish hopes and faith in the unknown future. They were all there, talking and laughing as in the happy days of yore. Even Auriel was beguiled into forgetfulness of pain, and joined with quiet joke and smile. And then he awoke; only to sleep and dream again.

The scene was changed. A sadness rested on each thoughtful face, and hand was clasped in hand. No voice was heard, but as the fitful firelight flickered

upon the silent group, it seemed as if their faces spoke. In each he read a different tale. Impatient and restless, Hugh's dark eyes flashed with mingled pain and doubt. Claud's gentler face was full of wistful longing. Auriel, with look of love and yearning, played with his artist brother's fair, soft hair, the language of the heart's most earnest pleading in his large dark eyes.

And as he gazed a voice broke on the stillness.

'For my sake! Is it too much to ask?'

The words awoke a host of memories, and Eric started up with outstretched hand—

'Auriel! Auriel!'

But no answer came, save the rough sounds from overhead. Auriel's voice again was stilled. He rose and went on deck, and found a changed and clouded sky. The wind was rising fast, and to the accustomed eye it was evident that a storm was brooding.

'A sudden change,' remarked a gray-haired man, sweeping the horizon with anxious eye. 'Is it likely to come up? The storm, I mean.'

There was a tremor in his voice, and Eric scanned him narrowly. Cowardice in man is ever apt to rouse contempt.

'More than likely. Are you afraid?'

'With the fear of superstition. It is my last voyage, and I am homeward bound!' was the strange reply. 'That storm brings death!'

'Dare you not die?'

The stranger raised his eyes, and met the calm enquiring gaze.

‘It is so dark beyond!’ he murmured to himself, and turned away.

The storm burst on them with all the wild fury of which the elements were capable. The rough-voiced wind howled amid the rigging, and giant waves upleapt to meet the lowering clouds. Even the boldest heart quailed, and the bravest grew pale with a fear they would not own. All was tumult, and mad uproar. But calm amidst the riot of wave and wind, the captain stood, a tower of strength. Reassuring, in its steady, firm composure, his voice ran clear and high above the noise of tempest, and hearing it, the trembling hands grew strong to work.

But though he stood with face unmoved, his heart was on its knees. Not for himself: for them, the men and gently-nurtured boys whose lives were in the balance.

‘Captain,’ said the boy, whose dreams had been of home and mother, ‘will you let me hold your hand—when we go down?’

The brave young face, white with the resistless agony of death, was lifted up, and through the dark pleading eyes there looked a spirit of the past.

‘Auriel!’ whispered the captain, stooping with sudden impulse to kiss the fair young cheek.

The child looked up amazed; but smiled, and laid his little rough brown hand upon the captain’s arm.

‘I shall not be afraid,’ he murmured. ‘At least it will be easier. If only it could be in the daylight; the night is so dark and dreadful.’

‘For my sake!’ Strange that mere memory-spoken words should be so loud.

‘There is a sun which makes light the darkest night, my child—the Sun of Righteousness.’

‘The Saviour!’ said the boy, with troubled eyes.

The hull had passed, and further words were vain.

Bravely the gallant vessel struggled through the seething sea; but her fate was sealed. Broken, dismantled, she lay at last a hopeless wreck, fast sinking beneath the waves. The boats remained, the only chance of safety.

With cheering word, and even smile, the captain saw the last embark, then took his place beside him. Day followed day, and still they floated on the waste of waters. No friendly sail drew near to rouse their drooping hearts and give fresh hope. It seemed as if a fate more terrible than that of sinking with their own doomed ship awaited them.

Faint with the sick faintness of a dying hope, the men sank gradually into a sullen apathy. Their captain’s words fell powerless on the listless ears, and gaunt hunger stole the light from every eye. It was hard for them; but harder still for *him*—their captain.

Numb with a great despair, his lips at last refused to move. Bowed with its weight of agony, the stately head sank upon the nerveless hands, while from the breaking heart went up the cry—

‘My God; hast Thou forsaken us? Not for myself; for them I pray.’

‘I don’t know how to die,’ burst with quivering sobs

from the parched lips of the gray-haired wanderer. 'Can it be worse beyond the grave than this? Can death do more than life? O, God! the torture of thirst and fear.'

Like drops of molten lead the words fell on the captain's heart. Wild rebellion, bitter, humble grief struggled for the mastery.

'The Sun of Righteousness!' whispered the sailor boy, lifting his faint blue eyes to the captain's face. 'Speak to us of Him. O! tell us of Jesus.'

'Jesus,' groaned a sailor, shaking his head with its crown of hoary hairs. 'I loved Him once. Ah! long ago.'

Memories crowded thick and fast, and the old man shook and sobbed.

'You loved Him once? Yes! but He loves you now,' said Eric, uplifting his haggard face. 'It is not dark beyond the grave if He is there. He is the Sun of Righteousness. It is not hard to die if He is near to hold our hand. He loves us still. His name is Love.'

'Love! And He leaves us here to die?' cried one, with gloomy face.

'Yes! love so great that even now He waits to pardon and forgive. There is much to pardon in your past, and in mine. But His own promise is given, and His word is sure; it cannot fail.'

'What promise?'

'Of help, life, light! We need them all.'

'Can He save us from this?' asked one, with a sweep of his horny hand.

‘If it be His will. If not, He can do more—far more, and better. His love is great, and His patience never-failing.’

‘Tell us more,’ they murmured; and with kindling heart Eric roused himself and spoke. Words that long years ago had fallen on his childish ears. Words of comfort, of help, and courage. He told them of the love which sent, the love which came, a ransom for the sins of men. He told them all that love had done. His own voice failed him as he spoke of hours of anguish; of all the untold anguish of the Cross; and as they listened the weary, burdened hearts gave way, and silent tears coursed down each rugged cheek.

‘Is it all true? Tell us! Such words are bread and water to our starving souls! Speak to Him for us—our hearts will follow all you say.’

‘Ah, yes! Ask Him to save,’ pleaded the boy. ‘And if it be not His will, ask Him to hold our hand.’

Humbly the reverent words of prayer fell from the strong man’s lips.

‘Father, forgive us that we have not sought Thy face before. The toilsome years of life have taught us this—that without Thee there is no rest, no perfect peace. We will not live without Thee! We dare not die without Thee! Hold Thou our hand, and teach us how to die. Dear Saviour, Sun of Righteousness, light Thou our path from life, through death, to Thee. We do not claim, we ask Thy love and pity. If it be Thy will to give us life, we thank

and love Thee for Thy watchful care. If it be Thy will to take us from this fair earth, be Thou our guide, our consolation, and our strength. We give ourselves to Thee in solemn consecration. In life, in death, remember, Lord, Thine own.'

'Remember, Lord, Thine own.'

Straight from each trembling heart went up the broken words of prayer, fraught with the soul's most passionate entreaty.

* * * * *

The sun was sinking in the quiet sky, casting a golden light on church and mound. Among the simple, unpretending graves in the quaint old moss-grown churchyard a slender marble column stood conspicuous in its snowy grace. A pure white marble pillar, twined about with ivy, through which a single name showed clear—

'AURIEL.'

And beneath it ran the words—

'The Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wing.'

As the sun sank to rest, a weary traveller drew near the mound. He stood before it gazing with dimmed eyes upon the deep-carved name, and drawing back the leaves with gentle, loving touch. So wrapped in thought was he that he neither saw nor heard the two who with slow, reverent step came forward from the shadow of the trees.

For one moment only they stood in silence by his side; then with impulsive cry the elder laid his hand upon his arm.

‘Eric!’

He turned and grasped their outstretched hands, but could not speak. Deep emotion sealed his lips.

‘By Auriel’s side!’ said Claud, his dark eyes full of faith and gladness. ‘We meet at last! In his name, Eric, welcome home.’

The mother sat in her accustomed place, watching the firelight rise and fall. Her accustomed place by the side of the faded couch! The aged hands were folded on an open book, but her thoughts were far away. She heard the sound of footsteps, and her quick ear detected the firm, ringing tread of one for whom her mother’s heart was mourning as for the dead.

‘Eric, my son!’

The tremulous lips could say no more. He knelt beside her, and she drew the dear head down upon her shoulder.

‘Father, I thank Thee that ere my sun of life has set Thou hast given me this!’

‘Thank Him for more than this, my mother! The Sun of Righteousness hath risen on your boy! Auriel’s sun. It rose upon the darkest night my life has ever known, and made it glorious! Thank Him for that.’

The gloom and darkness of approaching night were on the earth, but in the quiet room the brightness of a sun that never sets made radiant light and beauty.



CATTERINA.

CHAPTER I.



EWAS only an ordinary-looking organ-grinder, and but for the child he led by the hand, would have excited no remark. A man with a history of disappointments and blighted hopes written upon his shabby garments and downcast, haggard face; with a history of sin and shame in his furtive glance and lowering brow. A common enough sight; too common to be noticed.

But the child by his side attracted many a pitying glance. The oval face was colourless and thin, but of exquisite contour. Soft waves of dusky hair fringed the low forehead and clustered round the shapely little head. An old black velvet frock, worn and threadbare, the cast-off

garment of some fortune's favourite, gave an air of richness out of place upon the little barefoot vagrant; and yet according well with her dark, foreign beauty.

But it was not alone the beauty of the little face which made the women turn again to look, it was the story told by the long lashes resting motionless upon the colourless cheeks.

'Blind!' they murmured; 'God help her!'

Unconscious or unmindful of remark they wandered on, while close behind them, like a never-wearying shadow, followed a boy; a thick-set, awkward-looking boy, with the darkness of a clouded intellect resting upon him. All that long day they had tramped the wilderness of London streets, and now it was night, and with weary feet they sought the dim court in which they lived.

Up the steep stairs toiled the tired child; but the steps were old, rotten and broken, and the little bare feet slipped and she fell.

In a moment the boy sprang forward, and took her in his arms, muttering incoherent words of delight.

'Bring her up,' said the man, harshly, as he stumbled into the room above.

'Good Sandy! Catterina loves Sandy,' said the child, in a low, sweet voice, patting the boy's rough cheek with her little brown hand. 'Father's tired and cross, but Sandy musn't mind.'

'Sandy not care,' said the boy, doggedly. 'He's bad man to-night; Sandy hide.'

Dropping his little burden gently on her feet, he

turned to leave the room, but the man called him back.

‘Go and fetch a candle,’ he said, peremptorily, throwing down a coin; ‘and don’t be gone half-an-hour.’

In a few minutes the boy came back, and not waiting for the harsh dismissal which experience had taught him to expect, shrank out of the room, and hid himself in his cupboard on the landing.

Lighting the candle, the man turned the contents of his pocket on the table, and hearing the jingle of money, the child drew near.

‘Father,’ she said anxiously, ‘how much is it?’

‘How much!’ he echoed drearily, ‘thee’d better ask how little, child!’

‘Is it enough for the rent, father?’

‘Not unless thee can stretch one-and-tenpence into three shillings. Sevenpence, Catterina! Sevenpence, child! We’ve walked and played and tramped about all day for sevenpence. This is a fine world to live in, isn’t it! A jolly world for organ-grinders and blind brats! What shall we do, child? Shall we make a dive off the old bridge together, or shall I get thee a little dog and send thee out begging? Say, Catterina, what would thee like me to do?’ And he pulled the child toward him and buried his rough hand in her mass of hair.

‘Thy hair will fetch something, child,’ he went on recklessly. ‘Let’s go and be shorn. It’ll make a grand wig for some fine lady, and she’ll never dream it came from the head of a blind brat, the child of an

organ-grinder and a poor Italian girl! Ha! ha! what a tale thy hair would tell at some fine banquet if it could speak! Shall we cut off thy hair, Catterina?’

‘No, father,’ said the child, gently.

‘Shall we go to the workhouse, then? We’ll have fine times there! Work, work, work, and no play! They’ll give thee gruel to eat, and that’ll make thee fat. Come, let us go to the workhouse.’

The child did not move; there was only a faint tremble of the long eyelashes as she listened in silence. She was used to her father’s mad moods. But she shuddered at his next words.

‘What, doesn’t the workhouse suit you? Isn’t it tempting enough? I know another place, Catterina; what say you to a prison? What are you trembling for? All the world’s a prison! Are you frightened at a name? What’s in a name? To starve to death by any other name would be as hard. Call it going behind the curtain, or shuffling off this mortal coil, or falling asleep, or kicking the bucket, or anything else you like; it’s all the same.’

‘I don’t like any of those, father.’

‘What! not falling asleep? I thought that would be your style. What do you like, then? Come, out with it.’

‘I like to think it’s going into the light, father,’ said the child, quietly.

The father laughed mockingly. ‘And the tired man thinks it’s going into rest, and the sick man thinks it is going out of pain, and the homeless

thinks it is going home ! What is it to thy father, Catterina ? What is dying to me, child ?'

'What is it, father ?'

'There, get thee to bed : don't trouble thy brains about me. I'll to the powers that be downstairs and see if I can appease the vixen's wrath.'

And with a curious mixture of theatrical gesture and real anxiety the organ-grinder turned to leave the room ; but Catterina held him fast.

'Father,' she said, patiently : 'there's no bread—there's nothing to eat in the house.'

'In the cupboard, you mean. There's plenty downstairs. I'll bring you something to eat, dear,' replied her father, suddenly resuming his natural manner. 'I will see what I can do about the rent ; perhaps she will take half now, and I'll spend the fourpence for you. Go and lie down, there's a good child. You must be tired enough.'

He went out, and the child stood still, straining every nerve to listen. She heard her father's voice, at first subdued and quiet, then raised and angry.

'My good woman, if I have not the money how can I give it you ?'

'Don't "my good woman" me !' came the angry answer. 'I am an honest woman, at any rate, and owe nothing to nobody. It 'ud be well if you could say the same, mister. My rent's three shillings, and three shillings I'll have ! Don't offer me yer one-and-sixpences.'

'Thank you, madam, for your kind refusal to take

my little all,' said the organ-grinder, in bitter mockery. 'My little girl shall fare sumptuously to-night.'

'Fare sumptuously on dry bread and water!' shouted the woman, as he went up the court. 'That's all the fare she'll get—if she gets that.'

For half-an-hour the child sat waiting, and then crept out on the landing.

'Sandy,' she whispered.

The cupboard-door opened, and out tumbled the idiot boy. 'Sandy not asleep,' he said eagerly. 'Hear bad woman.'

'Will Sandy take Catterina to father?' said the child, stroking his face. 'Father forgets, and if Catterina does not fetch the money now it will all go.'

Sandy's face lowered angrily. 'Bad man, to drink all the money! Sandy knows where he is! Big lights and big noise.'

Hand in hand the two crept downstairs, and out into the night. On they went in silence till they stood at the door of a public-house. Not one of the brilliant, glaring gin-palaces with which the streets of London abound, but a smaller, and, if possible, less reputable place. There were, as Sandy had said, 'big lights' and plenty of noise, as the men within caroused and sang their boisterous songs.

Sandy pushed open the door and peeped furtively in.

'Sandy see him,' he whispered, drawing back. 'He stand up and drink.'

Bending forward, the child listened eagerly, till, amid the Babel of sounds, she caught her father's voice, and her hand trembled in Sandy's.

'Yes, it is father. Perhaps if Catterina goes in he will give her money.'

But the boy shrank back with a gesture of fear. 'They will hurt Sandy! Sandy afraid!'

'Then Catterina will go alone; no one will hurt Catterina,' said the child, with unconscious pathos. Pushing open the door, she went in, and then stood irresolute in the hot, close room, not knowing which way to turn.

'What do you want?' said a rough voice, and a still rougher hand was laid upon her shoulder.

'I want to speak to father, please.'

'Who is your father?'

'He's Michael, the organ-grinder.'

'I've seen her with him,' said another voice.

'Here, Michael, you're wanted.'

The speaker took the child's hand, and passed her forward towards her father, but he did it roughly, and she stumbled and nearly fell.

'Can't you keep on your feet?' he cried, angrily.

'I am blind, sir,' said the child, humbly.

'Blind!' he echoed, and with a muttered curse drew away his hand as if he had been stung.

'What! my lady daughter!' cried Michael, striking an attitude. 'Fair descendant of a princely house! come and discourse to these noble gentlemen: tell them good sentences, and well pronounced.'

Snatching her up, he placed her on the table facing the noisy crew. 'Now, sweet madam,' he went on, mockingly, 'tell us of your courtesy. What! not a word? Faith, an' thy tongue is tied.'

'Father, what am I to say?'

'Anything that suits thy fancy. And thy fancy is toward moralizing; bid them be moral.'

"If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces," said the child, her eyelids trembling. "It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow my own teaching."

The men applauded loudly, and her father laughed.

'Well and wisely spoken, fair Portia; none will gainsay thy words. Now, what do you want, child?'

'Father, there is nothing to eat, and I am hungry,' she whispered, still speaking in the same little, sad, patient way, which seemed habitual to her.

The man who had helped her forward heard the words, and spoke out hotly, 'Give the child money! Shame on you, Michael, to let such a mite go hungry.'

'How much will you have, Catterina? The one-and-six or the fourpence? which is it to be?' said her father, mockingly.

‘The fourpence, please, father.’

‘Take it and go,’ he said, thrusting it in her hand.

‘Can you find your way home?’ said the man.

‘Sandy is waiting; he will take me.’

‘Ho, there!’ shouted Michael. ‘Call my daughter’s faithful henchman. Alexander, most noble Alexander, convey your mistress to her stately halls.’

‘Sandy,’ said Catterina.

The idiot boy came forward, and took her hand eagerly. ‘Quick, quick!’ he whispered, pulling her toward the door, ‘Sandy afraid!’

Not a hand was outstretched to stop them, and not a jest was uttered at the expense of the half-witted lad. Unmolested they went into the still busy streets, and more than one of the drinking crew drew a breath of relief as the little patient face passed from their sight.

‘Catterina got money?’ asked Sandy, wistfully.

‘Yes; we will buy bread now, Sandy.’

With uncouth gestures, expressive of delight, he led the way to a baker’s shop.

‘Sandy hungry now! Have supper!’ he cried, hurrying her up the step. ‘Quick and buy!’

Turning her face toward the sound of voices, the child held out her hand with the money. ‘Please will you give me twopenn’orth of bread?’

‘Why don’t you look up when you speak?’ said a woman, harshly.

‘O, mother, don’t; she’s blind,’ said a gentler

voice. 'It's Michael the organ-grinder's little girl. Give her a good piece, mother : poor little mite!'

Two huge pieces of bread were passed silently over the counter into Catterina's waiting hands, and with murmured thanks she turned to leave the shop.

'And mother,' added the compassionate voice, 'give her a bit of cheese ; you'll never miss it. Stop a minute, dear. Where's your father?'

The child made no reply.

'Ah, well ; it's only where they all go. Now, mind, this cheese is for yourself.'

'And Sandy.'

'Sandy? O, it's you, is it? Yes; Sandy may have some. Be careful at the crossings.'

Standing at the door, the young woman watched them out of sight, and then turned away, with a sigh.

'It's a strange world, anyhow! If it wasn't for something better somewhere else, folks hadn't need to want to live. There's some folks God *must* take care of, for there's no one else to do it. Blind and beautiful! and t'other one an idiot! If they ain't got a claim on Him, I don't know who has!'

'And the father drinking in a public!' said her mother. 'There ain't much good in a man if he once takes to drink.'

CHAPTER II.

JOHN MICHAEL, Catterina's father, had in his younger years been an actor on third and fourth-rate country stages. A London manager, seeing him act, had once said that he had in him the making of a tolerable actor, and had he been plodding and steady he might have risen from the ranks. But, like many another, he had given way to this innate indolence, and refusing to apply himself, had sunk gradually, till made reckless by repeated dismissals, he had taken to drink. Then his doom was sealed.

His pretty young Italian wife, unable to bear continued privation and hardship, had died, leaving him alone with his little blind daughter. Not quite alone since their return to London, for the half-witted boy, Sandy, had followed them persistently, like a faithful dog. At first the organ had attracted him, and he had followed for the pleasure of hearing the music ; but afterwards the helplessness of the blind child had won his sympathy, and her gentleness his love. Never had lady more faithful servant than Catterina in her idiot guide.

He slept in an old cupboard on the landing outside her door, and was always ready at her call. The lodging-house keeper was a relative of his, and grudgingly allowed him house-room, though she constantly threatened to send him to the workhouse. Poor Sandy knew what that meant : he had lived six years of his life in a workhouse, and the very thought of returning was a terror

But either from sheer indifference, or a stray feeling of kindness, she left him alone. He was no trouble to her : how he lived she neither knew nor cared ; so, unmolested, he crept at night to his landing cupboard, and in the daytime followed his self-elected little mistress.

Michael did not like the boy, but he found him useful, and so tolerated him. He was not naturally a cruel or unkind man ; after a fashion of his own he loved his little girl, and, as far as he could, supplied her wants. When he was sober, and not in one of his reckless moods, he would go without food rather than see her want ; and even at his worst he never laid a finger on her to hurt her. With Sandy it was different : he would give him a kick and a blow for merely being within reach, and the boy feared and disliked him.

More than once the occupant of a luxurious carriage had stopped to speak pitying words to the little one, and then had offered the father gold for his beautiful child. But, fallen as he was, there was still something noble left, and he spurned the idea of selling his child for gold.

In happier days he had been proud of his histrionic talent, proud of his memory. It had been his boast that he knew the chief of Shakespeare's plays by heart. He could not get rid of the old stage manner, nor forget the words which, by force of habit and usage, seemed more his own than borrowed. It would have been almost impossible for him to clothe his thoughts in other than the old familiar household words.

Many a time, in their wanderings, he had held his little daughter spell-bound with the story of the enchanted island, the pranks of the fairies, or the sad fate of Capulet's daughter. And then he would teach her to take her part, and the grave child-lips gave additional quaintness to the quaint words with which Juliet mourns her hapless fate, or Portia speaks her weariness of this great world.

Sometimes for weeks together Michael would remain morose, sullen, and silent. Then he would wake up to new life, and instead of 'my blind brat,' Catterina would take her place as 'My lady daughter; fair mistress; most noble lady.'

The child liked it. She knew her father, in his rough moods, meant no unkindness; but the courtly chivalry of the quaint old terms suited the natural refinement of her sensitive Southern nature.

She was a strange child. Hedged in by her blindness, she lived a life apart from others. From her mother she inherited a passionate, loving nature; but the isolation from the world consequent on her blindness, and the strange lessons of her strange father, had taught her a self-repression wonderful in one so young.

From her father she inherited a higher order of intellect than is generally found in her class, and a retentive memory which, for her own happiness, she would have been better without.

She knew much that childhood ought not to know. Words of sin fell on her ear unheeded—she was used to them. Tales of crime were told before

her, with oath and jest, and she listened with apathy. The people in the court stood aside to let her pass, and even the lawless *gamins* left her unmolested. She lived in a world unknown to them, fenced in by her blindness from all touch or stain of evil.

Sandy was her sole companion, and with him she was both protector and protected. Sometimes when Michael had left them for the day, the boy would take her into the streets, where, by the silent appeal of her downcast eyes, he won many a penny—but he spent it all for her. Catterina would wonder when he put the cake or apple in her hand, and little thought her own unconscious pleading had obtained them. And Sandy could not tell her—he had a dim consciousness that the sight of the little face touched the hearts of the passers-by—but he could not put this consciousness into words. It was well for Catterina that he could not—her proud little spirit would have rebelled against the tacit begging.

But though Sandy was her only companion she had many friends. The women in the lodging-house were always ready and gladly willing to perform for her many womanly offices. Her little feet, though bare, were beautifully clean; her hair well brushed, and her garments clean and whole.

Even the landlady, with her host of turbulent unruly young ones, found time to knit a comforter for the most helpless of her lodgers. Her tongue was sharp to others—never to Catterina.

It was her voice which woke the tired child the

morning after she had followed her father to the public-house.

‘Catterina! child, awake! Here’s a pretty go!’

Quickly the child sprang up, and turned in mute questioning toward the angry voice.

‘Here’s your father in prison again, and this time for assaulting the police! He’ll get a month of it, for sure.’

‘Father in prison!’ echoed the child, startled and frightened.

‘Yes; and what’s more, he’ll have to stay there! Why wouldn’t he come home like a decent man, instead of fighting like a Turk? What’s to become of you, I don’t know, no more than the man in the moon!’

‘Can’t I stay here till father comes out?’ asked the child, with a tremble in her voice.

‘It’ll be a month afore he’s out, and serve him right, the beast! Who’s to pay me my rent? just tell me that.’

‘Father will when he comes out.’

The woman snorted contemptuously, and looked round the room.

‘Here’s the organ,’ she said, reflectively, ‘I could sell that. I must say he always *have* paid his rent till now, so I don’t want to be hard on him. Look here, you go round to the Court—Sandy knows the way—and hear what they give him. If they don’t give him more than a fortnight you may stay here—you and the organ.’

She went downstairs, and Sandy crept in, and

silently touched his little mistress's hand. He had heard the word 'prison,' and clouded as was his intellect he knew its meaning.

'Is Catterina sorry?' he asked wistfully.

'Catterina's heart is full!' replied the child with a shiver and a sob. 'Sandy must come to the Court—now.'

The boy rose obediently, his uncouth features full of trouble. It was so new to see Catterina cry.

It was a long way to the Court, and as they hurried on hand in hand, a man stopped and spoke to them.

'Do you know your father's in prison?'

Catterina knew the voice: it was the same that had spoken to her in the public-house the previous night.

'Yes,' she answered, instinctively stretching out her hand 'I am going to the Court.'

He took her hand in his, and looked down pityingly. 'Going to the Court with only that boy?'

'Sandy is clever—he knows the way and takes care of me.'

'They will turn you out! two such children! There, there, don't look so frightened. I'm going that way, and will see what I can do.'

He walked on, still holding the little hand in his, and Sandy followed in zealous silence.

'Do you love your father?' suddenly asked their new guide.

‘Yes, sir,’ replied Catterina, after a pause of surprise.

‘You want to get him out of prison?’

‘O, yes, sir! if I only could.’

‘Umph! perhaps it would be best for you if he were to stay in; but that’s neither here nor there. Now, I’m going to leave you and Sandy here a bit; I’ll come back soon.’

He went away, and the children sat down on a step in the sunshine. Presently he came back and put his hand on her shoulder.

‘Listen to me. If any one speaks to you, turn your face toward them and speak up. Tell them your father’s good to you, and—he is, isn’t he?’

‘He’s always good to me, sir.’

‘That’s right. Mind you say so, and tell them that your mother’s dead, and so on. Do you understand?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Ask them not to send your father to prison. Say he is all you have in the world—say anything of that sort, only turn that face of yours toward them. If they can resist that they’re harder than I am, and I’m hard enough, God knows! What is your name?’

‘Catterina.’

‘Outlandish nonsense! Never mind; you did not choose your own name. Remember what I told you.’

The next minute they were in the Court, and Catterina felt that she was in the midst of a crowd.

She was pushed from side to side, but her protector held her firmly and then suddenly lifted her up.

‘Catterina!’

It was her father’s voice, startled and surprised. There was a confused medley of sounds, and then again she heard his voice.

‘John Michael, your worship: one by whom fortune, fickle jade, has played a scurvy part.’

‘Men ruin themselves, and then lay the blame on fortune,’ replied the magistrate, sententiously. ‘Fortune is to blame for no man’s sin.’

‘Men are men: the best sometimes forget.’

‘Then it is our business to mend their memories,’ was the curt reply. ‘You seem to have occupied a better position. Have you any regard for your reputation?’

‘Reputation, reputation, reputation! O! I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself!’

‘It is better to correct an evil than lament it. Reformation is better than repentance.’

‘It is easier to talk than to do,’ said Michael, mockingly. ‘Ask my daughter there, and she will tell you that it were easier to teach twenty what were good to be done, than to be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching.’

There was silence for a moment, and the sensitive child felt that every eye was turned upon her.

‘Is that little girl your daughter?’ asked the magistrate.

‘That is my daughter.’

‘Is her mother alive?’

‘Her mother is dead, your worship.’

‘And you have the care of the child. I am afraid she knows little of a father’s care.’

‘He is always good to me! he is always kind!’ cried the child.

The magistrate looked at her and his voice softened.

‘What is your name, my dear? Don’t be afraid: look up.’

A murmur fell upon his ear, and he turned hastily.

‘Eh? What? Blind? Is the child blind?’

‘So they say, your worship. It may be a begging imposture.’

‘Are you blind, little girl?’

‘I cannot see, sir,’ was the low reply.

‘She is blind,’ cried a voice. ‘I know her.’

‘Poor little girl! And you, her father; it is a sin and a shame to leave such a child alone in the world while you work out your time in prison. Have you no natural affection?’

Michael turned and looked at his child. ‘Natural affection dies a natural death when men put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains. And yet—I love the child, your worship.’

‘Words are cheap. Has the child any one to take care of her now?’

‘She has; I will see that she wants for nothing,’ said Catterina’s new friend. Michael nodded to him.

‘Thanks, good Stephen.’

The business of the court proceeded, and Michael received his sentence of a fortnight's imprisonment with equanimity. But he looked anxiously at Catterina, and when he was removed she was taken to him.

'Well, Catterina, what wilt thou do now?' he asked, drawing her on his knee. 'I'm to prison, you see.'

'What am I to do, father?' she asked wistfully.

'To be now a sensible man, by-and-by a fool, and presently a beast!' he murmured. 'It is well said that every inordinate cup is unblessed and the ingredient is a devil.'

'Come, don't use any more bad language,' interrupted the officer. 'It isn't fit that children should hear such foolery.'

'Now, on my faith! convicted by thine own lips, brother fool,' said Michael, sarcastically. 'But when thou quotest, quote correctly. Catterina, correct this gentleman.'

'Tis not good that children should know any wickedness,' repeated the child, with her usual prompt obedience: 'old folks, you know have discretion, as they say, and know the world.'

'The child is as bad as the father,' said the man resentfully. 'They are both mad, I think.'

'If this be madness at least there's method in it,' retorted Michael. 'Now, my child, the time is short.'

'I will take care that she wants for nothing,' said Stephen, roughly. 'Go to prison, like the fool you

are, and then see if you can't keep that enemy out of your mouth for the future.'

Catterina clung silently to her father, wishing him good-bye with caresses rather than words. Then she went out to Sandy, and Stephen took them both home.

CHAPTER III.

THE woman knew well what she was doing when she told the child she might stay there till her father was out of prison. She had no real fear for her rent; Michael had never failed to pay. Besides, there was the organ. Therefore she was more angry than glad when Stephen took away the organ and the child.

He took them to his own home, but they met with scant welcome there. Times were hard, money scarce, and little mouths numerous.

At first Catterina was confused and bewildered by the constant noise and tumult, for she was unaccustomed to the daily quarrels and strife which never seemed to cease.

Sandy followed her to her new abode, and seized the first chance to lead her out to their favourite haunts. They did not venture into the principal thoroughfares, but kept to the narrow streets which were familiar ground to both. Sometimes they wandered into a dim old church, and listened to the

organ; but Sandy did not care for church music—he liked the merry tunes of Michael's organ better.

They wandered one day further than they had been before; and, as they stood still to rest in the warm sunshine, Catterina heard a voice beside her slowly spelling out words which bore for her a strange significance.

‘One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.’

The voice stopped, and after a short pause went on again:

‘One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.’

‘Who made you see?’ asked Catterina, with trembling eagerness.

‘Then said they to him again, What did He to thee? How opened He thine eyes?’

Again a pause, and Catterina stretched out her hand in the direction of the speaker.

‘What did He do?’ she said, with breathless interest. ‘Did he make you see? I am blind, too. Will He make me see?’

‘Who is it speaking?’

‘Me! Catterina! I am blind, too! When did He make you see?’

‘Little miss, I am a poor, old blind man, and deaf. What is it you say?’

‘Are you blind now?’ said the child, creeping nearer.

‘I have always been blind, my dear.’

‘But you said He had made you see,’ she said, with a sob of disappointment.

‘That was when the blessed Lord was on earth, my dear. He made the blind to see, and the lame to walk. That was many, many years ago.’

‘I thought it was you! Is He dead?’

‘Who?’ asked the old man.

‘Him that cured the blind. Where is He?’

‘It is the Lord! Our Saviour, you know. He was crucified years and years ago. There ain’t no one can cure the blind now-a-days, wus luck. So you’re a little blind gal, are you? An’ you thought you was going to get cured. Bless you, my dear, you must bide till you get to heaven for that; leastways, if you’re blind, like me.’

‘Shall I go to heaven?’ asked the child, wonderingly.

A look of astonishment came into the old man’s face. ‘Little Miss, haven’t you heard tell of the Bible and all that’s in it? If you love the blessed Lord He’ll take you to heaven. Don’t you know that?’

The child stood thinking. ‘But Hamlet didn’t believe that,’ she said, at last.

‘And who may he be?’ said the old man, sharply. ‘Hamlet, or Mr. Hamlet, whoever he may be, hadn’t read what I’ve read, or he’d believe it fast enough. What do he believe?’

‘I don’t know; he’s dead now. He was afraid to die, so you see he didn’t believe he was going to heaven.’

‘Then maybe he wasn’t a good man?’

‘He was mad; he killed the king,’ said Catterina, slowly.

‘No wonder he didn’t believe he was going to heaven. Taint likely he’d go unless he was mortal sorry for what he’d done. What do you know about such a bad man, my dear?’

‘I don’t think he was bad. He had a “sea of troubles.”’

The old man shook his head. ‘He didn’t take ’em right, my dear. Troubles is sent to do us good. What did he think would become of him?’

‘He didn’t know. Shall I tell you what he said?’

‘Ay, my dear; I’d like to know. Maybe he thought like me before I read it all in the blessed Bible. Tell me what he said.’

With unconscious imitation of her father’s tone, the child began :

“Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them? To die,—to sleep,—
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—’tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish’d. To die,—to sleep;—
To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there’s the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause——”

‘Ay, ay! poor fellow!’ interrupted the old man,

compassionately. 'I'll be bound he found a rub!
That was his bad conscience, my dear.'

'I know. He says so. He says:

"The dread of something after death,—
The undiscovered country, from whose bourne
No traveller returns,—puzzles the will;
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of!
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,"

'Sure enough, sure enough! that's true, my dear.
A bad conscience is bad company. I'm afraid the
poor young man came to a sad end, unless he found
out all about the Lord. Did he, my dear?'

Catterina looked troubled. 'He was killed too!'

'Dear, dear! how shocking! Where did you hear
all about it? Little girls shouldn't hear such things.
But perhaps some one told him that the Lord would
forgive him if he asked Him. There's plenty of
good men go into the prisons, so I hear. But, my
dear, a little girl like you should know that people
who love the Lord go to heaven. Haven't you learnt
no pretty hymns about it? Most children have.'

'No,' said Catterina, with indifference.

She had heard of heaven—that it was the home
of good people; but her idea of it and of Windsor
Castle were pretty much alike. They were for the
rich—places of beauty and happiness—but not for
such as she. The only pleasant thought she had in
connection with the future was, that it was all light
—that there she would see.

'You ask your mother to read you about the

beautiful city; and about Jesus curing the blind and blessing little children,' went on the old man.

It's prettier to hear, my dear, than about that poor young man.'

'Why doesn't He cure the blind now?' asked the child, absorbed in the one thought.

'So He will, in His own good time,' said the old man, hopefully. 'It won't be very long afore we go to heaven, and we shall see there. But He have give me eyes already; eyes in my heart, my dear.'

'But you can't see with them?'

'No! Shall I tell you what I see? I see two poor blind men, like me, a sitting by the roadside, and a great heap of people going by; and the blind men want to know what is going on, naterally enough; and some one tells them that the Lord is passing by. Then they call out to Him, and He stops and asks 'em what they want, and they say, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened."'

'Well?' said Catterina, as the old man paused.

'Well, I see Him put His hands on them, and they look up and see Him, and fall a praising of Him.'

'Is that all?' said the child, disappointed.

'No, no! the best part's a coming, my dear. I see the Lord look right straight at me, and says He, "Bide a bit, Simeon; I'm coming to thee soon," and then my old heart sings for joy.'

'But I can't see Him,' said the child, sadly.

'Likely not,' replied the old man, compassionately. It's only to them as loves Him He shows Himself.

You must ask Him to give you the eyes of the heart, my dear, and then you'll see Him fast enough.'

'Will He give them to me?'

'Ay, that will He. Will you come and see me again? Maybe we'll see Him together.'

Sandy, who had been waiting impatiently during the long, and to him incomprehensible conversation, gladly seized his little mistress's hand to lead her away. They walked home in silence, for Catterina was busy with new thoughts—new and perplexing.

It was a warm evening for the time of year, and after tea she slipped again to Sandy, and they sat down on the steps of an old gray church. The stars were shining in the dark, clear sky, and Sandy laughed, and clapped his hands as he watched them.

'What is it, Sandy?' asked the child.

'Little stars! Sandy likes the stars!'

'What are the stars?' she asked.

'Pretty, little, bright things—holes in the sky!'

'But heaven's above the sky, Sandy.'

'Sandy knows,' said the boy, decisively. 'They are little peep-holes, and the light comes through. They wink, wink, wink!'

'What makes them do that?' asked Catterina, with interest.

A vague, puzzled look came into the boy's face, and he did not answer.

'I wonder what makes them wink,' continued

Catterina, to herself, turning her face up toward the beautiful, quiet sky.

‘Little angels playing—run over the holes!’ cried Sandy, suddenly, clapping his hands exultantly. ‘Sandy knows now.’

‘If they are holes, perhaps the Lord looks down through them! I wonder if He does?’

‘Little angels playing!’ murmured Sandy, to himself, laughing softly, heedful of nothing but the novel thought.

‘Sandy,’ said Catterina, with sudden determination, ‘I am going to ask the Lord to let me see Him.’

The boy stopped laughing, and looked at her with awe-struck eyes. At various times, and from different sources, he had heard of a God in heaven, who rewarded the good, and punished the wicked, and was afraid of Him.

‘The Lord in heaven?’ he whispered, in a trembling voice.

‘Yes; Sandy shut his eyes too, and kneel down.’

Where she had learned the attitude of prayer God only knew.

Obedient, but frightened, he knelt beside her and folded his hands.

‘O Lord,’ murmured the child, lifting her rapt face to the shining stars; ‘the old man said you would let me see you with my heart. I am little, blind Catterina, and can’t see the stars, nor the sky, but I would rather see you, if you please. Will you let me?’

That old, gray city church had seen and heard strange things in its length of years; but no stranger prayer had ever been carried from beneath its shadow to the church above.

With wondering awe the boy looked from the twinkling stars to the little waiting face. 'Can Catterina see the Lord?' he whispered low.

She did not answer, and he looked up again, expectantly, with vague thoughts of a wondrous appearance among the shining stars. But there was nothing there, and he grew restless.

'Can Catterina see the Lord?' he whispered again, and she answered with a quivering sob of disappointment:

'No! it is all dark, dark! He won't let Catterina see Him.'

The old man's words had taken a strong hold on her imagination, and she had expected something very strange and beautiful; something that would bring mysterious pleasure into her life. She did not know what *seeing* meant; how should she? But she did know that by some means the old blind man had become possessed of a joy unknown to her, and yet attainable.

But hope died out as she waited for an answer to her prayer. With sorrowful heart she rose, and taking Sandy's willing hand, went back to the noisy house.

Stephen stood at the door, and patted her head kindly.

'Your father's coming out to-morrow. You must

go and meet him, Catterina, and bring him here. Ted will take you if Sandy doesn't know the way.'

The next day the two children, with little Ted for a guide, took up their place outside the prison gates.

'Well, my dear?'

Lost in thought, the child had not heard a sound till her father's voice fell upon her ear, startling her from her reverie.

'Father!' she cried, gladly clasping his hand.

'So you are glad your old father is out of prison? It's not a nice place, is it?'

He stooped and kissed her, and then walked on in silence. Sandy followed at a distance.

'So Stephen's kept the organ and the child for me,' said Michael, as he stepped into the house.

'Taint much of a keep; the one don't eat much more than the other,' replied the woman, shortly.

'Stephen said as how you were to come in to supper to-night—if you will,' she added ungraciously.

'No; I owe him enough already. Thank you for being kind to the child. I'll not forget it.'

Without further words Michael took the organ, and calling Catterina, left the house.

'Catterina, would you like to go down into the country?' he suddenly asked.

The child thought. 'For a little while, father,' she answered presently.

'Then we'll go to-morrow. Sandy may come too.' He said no more, but walked on, morose and sullen.

Long into the night the child lay awake, crying softly.

‘Why can’t I see the Lord?’ she murmured.
‘Why won’t He let me see Him, too?’

CHAPTER IV.

THE day was dull and cheerless, but the old man sat in his place by the wall, spelling out the wondrous words of wisdom. At the end of a verse he paused, for a little hand touched him.

‘Have you seen the Lord again?’ asked Catterina, with eager wistfulness.

‘Ay, my dear, surely! I see Him now.’

‘You said I might see Him too. I tried last night, but I couldn’t.’

The old man smiled. ‘Maybe you don’t love Him, my dear.’

‘Why should I?’ she asked, wonderingly.

‘That’s a dreadful question for a little girl to ask,’ he answered, reprovngly. ‘Don’t your mother tell you how He loved little children, and blessed them?’

‘My mother is dead. Father doesn’t talk about such things.’

‘Then stand by me, my dear, and I’ll tell you now. Dear, dear! there’s so much to tell.’

‘Tell me what you can see,’ said Catterina, for whom the subject had strange attraction, ‘I like that best.’

‘I can see,’ said the old man, slowly, ‘a many little children, playing round the doors and in the streets. Their mothers are busy working, or, maybe, talking, inside their homes. Now I see some men coming along, and they stop and tell the women that the Lord is come. Dear! what a talking and a fuss there is. Now I see the mothers running out and looking for their little children, and calling them to come, for the Lord is in the city, and will bless them. The little things don’t rightly know what it all means, but they are glad because their mothers are, bless their little hearts! And there’s the Lord, awaiting for them. He don’t look waiting, but I know He is. There’s hundreds round Him, but He knows the little children’s coming, and He’s looking out for them. That’s just what He does, my dear.’

‘What is He going to do to them?’ asked Catterina, carried away by the word-picturing which seemed to bring the scene before her.

‘The crowd don’t like to give way, and there’s some men there who love the Lord, but not the children—they are trying to keep them away from Him. But He sees it, and calls the little dears, and takes them in His arms, and blesses them. Maybe He kisses them, but I can’t rightly see that. There’s one little sick child He’s mighty tender with. Why, it’s quite well now!’

‘Has He cured it?’ cried the child, eagerly.

‘To be sure! The mother is a thanking of Him and praising Him, as well she may.’

‘Can you really see all that?’ asked Catterina, wistfully.

‘Ay, and lots more, my dear. The Lord is always a showing of them to me. There’s thousands of little children like you up in heaven, singing their pretty hymns. Don’t you sing no pretty hymns, my dear?’

‘I don’t know what hymns are. I sing songs.’

‘What sort of songs? any about heaven?’ asked the old man.

Catterina thought. ‘There’s one,’ she said slowly; ‘I don’t think it is your heaven, though.’

‘Sing it to me, my dear, will you? I like to hear little children sing.’

It was no new thing to Catterina to sing in the quieter streets, though she did not often do it. Without hesitation she began—

‘Who is Silvia? What is she?
That all our swains commend her?
Holy, fair, and wise is she;
The heavens such grace did lend her
That she might admired be.’

The old man shook his head. ‘It doesn’t sound very nice, my dear, not for a little girl. Don’t you know, “Around the throne of God in heaven”?’

‘No,’ said Catterina. ‘I’d rather you told me something else that you can see.’

In his own simple, quaint language the old man told her the old nursery story of the manger-cradled Babe, and the angels’ song by night; of the beautiful guiding star, and the hoary-headed worshippers

with their mystic gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And the child listened with bated breath and changing colour.

Then he told, with broken voice, of the lonely, forsaken Saviour—of His tears over the city, His anguish in the garden, and the cruel hatred of the infuriated mob. But when he tried to picture the dark scene on Calvary his voice failed, and he could not go on. Great tears rolled down the worn, old face, and his trembling fingers wandered nervously over the raised letters on his knee.

‘I’ll learn you a little hymn, my dear, if you like,’ he said, in a tremulous voice; ‘one that tells us why the dear Lord let them kill Him.

“There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

“We may not know, we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear;
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.

“He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious Blood.

“There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin.
He only could unlock the gate
Of Heaven and let us in.

“O ! dearly, dearly has He loved,
And we must love Him too,

And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do."

Do you think you can learn all that, my dear ?'

'Say it again,' said the child, eagerly ; 'I will soon learn it.'

Again the old man repeated the words, and with her wonderful memory Catterina took them down.

'Ay, but you're a wonderful clever little girl !' he said, as the soft little voice repeated the hymn correctly. 'But does it make you love the dear Lord, my dear ?'

'I love Him because He was good and kind !' replied the child, fervently. 'Do you think He will let me see Him now ? I do love Him ! indeed I do ! Will He let me see Him with my heart now ?'

'Surely, if the love is there,' replied the old man solemnly, laying his withered hand on the little head. 'The dear Lord bless and keep thee, my child.'

* * * * *

Years passed. Bowed with rheumatism and age the old man sat in his lonely garret, forgotten by all save one or two true hearts who found for him his daily bread. No longer was he able to take his accustomed place beneath the wall, and the passers-by had long since ceased to remember the old familiar face. For the world he had ceased to be, but still he lived

'Upon the God within his heart relying ;
Men left him all alone,

Because he was unknown,
But he heard the angels sing when he was dying.'

One day a stranger came into the street inquiring for an old blind man named Simeon. His errand was a strange one.

'An old friend wants to see me!' repeated Simeon, wondering much. 'Will send for me to-night? But I am old: I cannot walk.'

'You will not walk. You can get downstairs?'

'Ay, and out into the sunshine of a fine day—just a few steps, master.'

'That is right. I will come for you myself to-night.'

Evening came, and the old man was taken in a carriage to meet his unknown friend. They led him up some steps and placed him in a cushioned seat.

All around him was the sound of rustling dresses and murmuring voices, and he knew he was in a large assembly.

'Do not be alarmed,' said the kindly voice of his conductor. 'It is all right. Your friend is here, and will speak to you presently. Sit still and listen.'

He sat and listened. By his side two men were talking.

'Who is she?'

'I don't know. They say Lister found her in the streets with a drunken organ-grinder, and was struck by her beauty. It may or may not be true. Any-

how her voice is beauty itself! sweet, clear, and rich.'

'He educated her for the opera, they say.'

'Yes; but she did not like the idea. This is more her style of thing. Lister took her abroad, and had her educated in Italy. She well repays him.'

'What is that tale of an idiot boy?'

'My friend Sandy? He is sharp enough in some respects. I have seen him often at Lister's, but I don't know his history. The fact is, Lister doesn't like to encourage gossip about his *protégé*, and I ask no questions. Sandy makes a very good gardener, despite his want of wit. Hush! she is coming.'

The rustle and murmur ceased, and the old man raised his head to listen.

'Who was coming?'

A few notes were struck on some musical instrument, and then a low sweet voice broke on the silence.

'There is a green hill far away,
Without a city wall,
Where the dear Lord was crucified,
Who died to save us all.

'We may not know we cannot tell,
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there.'

Over the vast assembly the sad, sweet music of the mournful words rose and fell, enchaining every ear, and awakening slumbering echoes in many a

weary heart. Sweeter and clearer still rang out the pure young voice with its gracious message, and then sank into a passionate pathos and pleading—

‘O, dearly, dearly, has He loved,
And we must love Him too,
And trust in His redeeming blood,
And try His works to do.’

The last echoes of the tender words trembled into silence, but no burst of applause broke the stillness.

Then the old man heard the stifled murmur of a sob, and the deep-drawn breath of those whose hearts had thrilled beneath the singer’s wondrous power.

‘Could you hear the words?’ asked a voice beside him.

‘Ay! every one!’ he answered, with trembling lips. ‘Does the world care for such songs as that?’

‘Not much, I fear; they care more for the singer. She is going to sing again.’

Very different was the glad triumphant strain which now rose high and clear as the song of a bird—

‘I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.’

It seemed to old Simeon that the angels themselves could sing no nobler song, and his heart swelled as he followed the grand old declaration of faith.

Inspired by her words the sweet-voiced singer gathered strength and courage. Again and again rang out the triumphant strain, and the breathless hearers listened entranced.

‘And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.’

The clear voice faltered and trembled, and then died away in a quivering sob.

‘*Mine eyes!*’

Sightless eyes! which had never gazed on the wonders of God’s beautiful earth! which had never drunk in the gorgeous glory of the golden sunset, or the fair beauty of the starry night! which knew nothing of the bloom on the purple grape, the dancing sunbeams ’mid the leafy vine, the shimmering gleam on the rippling wave, the deep blue of the summer sky! which had never watched the shadows steal along the mountain side, or the rainbow arch the wooded vale, or the sea-bird skim the stormy wave, or the little child, with folded hands, bowing its head in prayer!

Poor sightless eyes! But in that day ‘*Mine eyes shall behold, and not another!*’

A hand was laid on the old man’s arm, and he was gently led away. As he stood in the quiet ante-room he heard a voice which woke strange memories.

‘Do you still see the dear Lord, Simeon?’

Back to the silent past he went with painful effort. Where had he heard that sweet low voice before, so familiar and yet so strange?

Ah, it all came back! the old wall, and the little singing child who wanted so to see the Lord! He remembered now.

‘My dear,’ he said, with tremulous voice, ‘I told you if the love was there He’d come; wasn’t it true?’

‘True as the hymn you taught me, dear old friend. I sang it to-night for you.’

‘Surely the dear Lord is glad,’ said the old man, reverently bowing his hoary head. ‘I am pretty nigh the time, my dear, when my old eyes shall see the King in His beauty; but I never knew before that the world cared to listen to such songs.’

‘Simeon,’ said the young singer, eagerly, ‘I am going to try to make them care. I want them to see Him as we see Him! I want to make them love Him, as you made me. I will sing to them all my life.’

* * * * *

The great world gave to its idolized favourite the homage of its tears. Words which in themselves were powerless to move, sprang into life beneath the magic of her wondrous power, and held them spell-bound. They ‘cared not for these things;’ but she made them care.

And so she gave up her young life to song, and the little singing child grew up to enchain the world. They said she lived upon the sweet words she sang, and scarcely knew the want of sight. They did not know—how should they?—that those words *were* sight to her.



A CHAT WITH A COASTGUARD.



RIGHT and sunshiny was the morning as we started on our favourite walk over the breezy downs. The wind was in the south-west, a threatening quarter, and this, with the ominous clearness of the Needles and St. Catherine's Down, warned us not to go far from shelter.

'We shall have rain before long,' said Harrie. 'We had better walk toward the Fort, I think; the clouds seem gathering for mischief.'

We stood on the edge of the cliff, watching a stone-boat loading in primitive fashion on the beach below. Two men pushed the stones up two smooth wooden rollers, and when they reached the top, tumbled them down into the boat, where other men were busily arranging them. A miserably slow process; tiring even to watch.

‘Here comes the rain at last,’ said Harrie, as a few small drops came slowly down.

‘It won’t be much,’ I replied, unbelievably. ‘The wind is too high; it is not worth going back for.’

But as I spoke, the drops grew large and numerous, and in another minute we were in the midst of a heavy summer shower. Fortunately the Fort was near, and we ran in for shelter. A coast-guardman stood in the doorway, with the everlasting telescope under his arm, and a little black dog shivering at his feet. We knew most of the coast-guardmen, but this one was a stranger.

‘What is the matter with your dog?’ asked Harrie. ‘Is it ill?’

‘O, no, sir; he’s well enough. It’s his bed-time, and he don’t know what to make of being out here.’

‘His bed-time? what, in the middle of the morning?’

‘He always sleeps in the day-time, sir, because he’s up all night. I’m out nine nights out of ten, and I always take him with me. It’s company, you see, sir.’

‘So it is, and good company, too. But if you are on guard at night, how is it you are here now?’

‘I was in bed last night, sir, so I have to be here till twelve this morning. I shall go out again at seven this evening, and stay all night.’

‘I suppose there isn’t much going on in the way of smuggling now, is there?’

‘Not much, sir; not the sort there used to be, when men got their living by it. Gentlemen bring over cigars, sometimes. We took some last night. Curious ones, they were; I never saw any like them before, though I’ve been in many countries. They had a sort of grass, or rush over them; not round, but downways. Beautiful cigars they were, sir. They’d be sixpence a-piece in England, I expect.’

‘How did you get them?’

‘A gentleman landed from a yacht, and we went down to have a look at his luggage, and found them. You see, sir, we have a right to haul over all luggage that lands here. Sometimes gentlemen coming home from the East Indies will hire a fishing-boat and land here, instead of going on to Portsmouth or Southampton; and they bring cigars and tobacco with them. I’m not so particular as some, and should take no notice of a pound of tobacco; but many of our men won’t let half-a-pound pass. A gentleman was fined the other day for half-a-pound, but I think it was because it had no brand on.’

‘It’s confoundedly annoying, I should say,’ said Harrie, ‘to have one’s luggage overhauled, and a box of choice cigars walked off with. Do they take it quietly?’

‘They know it’s no use making a fuss, sir. Duty’s duty. Sometimes they get obstreperous, but generally they say nothing.’

‘Have you power to board any vessel in the bay?’

‘If we suspect them, sir; not without. We don’t often care to board yachts, because they as likely as

not belong to Lords and Members of Parliament, and they don't like being insulted. A man was shifted at his own expense the other day for boarding a lord's yacht. But it isn't so much smuggling we look out for now-a-days. There's wrecks and dead bodies, you see, sir. Every night and every morning the coast is inspected, right round from point to point. Each man has to walk on till he meets the man of the next division, and they have to report that they met, and it's put down in the books. That's to make sure they do their duty.'

'I suppose you don't often find anything of value on the coast?'

'Not very often, sir. I have found some queer things in my time; especially down at Kimmeridge Bay. That's an awful place for wrecks, sir; the ledges run out a mile and three-quarters.'

'I know the place; an East Indiaman was wrecked there a few years ago. I forget her name.'

'I forget it, too, sir. I wasn't there at the time, but I found some of the things washed up after. There was a terrible wreck just before I left. Sixteen men were drowned. That was an awful night! it was that dark, I couldn't see my hand before my face, though I held it close. It was my night in bed, and I said to my wife, "there'll be a wreck to-night, you'll see; there's always something my night in bed." And sure enough there was. We saved a lot, but there were sixteen drowned; poor fellows! I found one of them the next night, washed right up among the rocks, miles away. That was

when I got Pip.' At the sound of his name the little dog jumped, and began to lick his master's hand.

'There, there, that will do; down Pip,' said the coastguardman. 'He's a knowing little customer, is Pip. I believe he knows what I'm talking about; eh, Pip?'

'Was he saved from the wreck?' I asked.

'No, miss; but he belonged to the gentleman I found under the cliff. Would you like to hear all about it, sir? It's rather a queer story; I never could quite make it out.'

'Tell us by all means,' said Harrie. 'Come here, Pip, and let me have a look at you. So you are a dog with a history, are you?'

'He's got a rare history, if only he could tell it, sir, I'll be bound. I'll tell you all I know. The night after the wreck, it was my turn along the coast toward St. Alban's Head, and off I went with my lantern, keeping a sharp look-out for anything that might be washed ashore from the wreck. A dreadful night it was! the rain coming down in torrents. The worst of it was, I couldn't see a step before me, and kept stumbling over the rocks, like anything. Well, how I knew I can't say, but somehow I felt there was something near, and there he lay down among the rocks, just washed up by the tide. I moved him higher up, on to the dry, and then went on, and met my man, and told him about it. He was put along with the other bodies—the gentleman I found, I mean, miss—and the next morning I went in to see him. He was quite young,

not more than twenty-one or two, I should say, and as fine a young fellow as ever I saw. As for my wife, she would come in to see him, after what I told her, and she fairly cried over him. While we stood there looking at him, that little dog came into the room, with a gentleman. You see a whole lot of people came to identify the bodies; news of a wreck soon spreads, and crowds come; some, because they have friends there, and some out of sheer curiosity. Well, that little dog went sniffing about, as if he wondered what queer company he'd got into. He came smelling round my legs, and then before I knew what he was up to, he jumped on the boards, and stood looking at the poor young gentleman. Well, sir, if you'll believe me, that dog went clean off his head. He howled and whined, and rolled over and over, licking the dead hands and face, as if he'd never leave off. Then the gentleman he came with walked up and stood at the foot, with a face as hard as iron. "Take away that dog," he said, speaking to no one in particular. I was nearest, and tried to catch hold of the little thing, but he turned and snapped at me. You did, didn't you, Pip? It weren't any good trying to hold him: he was mad; weren't you, Pip?

'Well, sir, the gentleman just stood there for about half-an-hour; never moving, nor speaking, and then he walked out, and I never saw him again. He gave orders that the body should be buried in the churchyard, and said he'd send a stone down for the grave. The day of the funeral I was so dead-

beat I couldn't make up my mind to turn out; but my wife, she went, and came back crying like anything, with Pip in her arms. She said that just as the grave was being filled, a carriage stopped at the churchyard gate, and a lady in black, with a veil on, got out and walked up to the man who was shovelling in the earth. "Is this the grave?" she said, in such a queer way, and the moment she spoke, Pip turned round quite startled-like. You see, miss, he hadn't gone away with the gentleman; we couldn't get him to leave the body. He snapped at every one who tried to move him, and some one went and told his master, and asked him to come and call him, but he wouldn't. He only swore hard at the dog, and told them to bury it with the young gentleman, so we let it be, and there it stayed till the day of the burial. Well, as I was saying, when he saw the lady in black, he began jumping up on her, and trying to lick her hand, and she took him in her arms and kissed him. "Good, faithful little fellow," she kept saying; "true little friend," and then she knelt down by the grave, and was as quiet as quiet could be. My wife was frightened; she thought she was fainting, maybe, so she went up to her, and touched her, and said, "Don't'ee cry, ma'am; the young gentleman is in a better world than this," and then the poor lady burst out sobbing, "My poor boy!" she said, in a sort of whisper. "My poor Philip! too late! too late!" She meant too late to see him, I suppose, sir, but of course I don't rightly know.

‘Leave a woman alone to comfort a woman. Now I shouldn’t have known what to say to the poor soul if I’d been there; but my wife, she talked to her, and comforted her up, and at last got her to leave the grave. All the way down to the gate, she kept on in a sort of moan, “O, my boy! my boy!” and when she got in the carriage, she fainted dead away. There was another lady inside, waiting for her, and she banged up the window, and ordered the man to drive on fast. My wife called out about the dog, and asked if they didn’t want it fetched, and she said “Give it away, or have it drowned,” just as the carriage drove off. We didn’t have it drowned; did we, Pip?’

‘What made you call it Pip?’ asked Harrie.

‘They were the initials on the stone as was sent down, sir. It was plain white marble, very heavy, with just those three letters on it, P. I. P. The father’s name—I suppose he was the father—was Pierson, so the two P’s stand for Philip Pearson; but what the *I* meant I don’t know. We called the dog Pip, and Pip’s the only name he knows now.’

‘Did you ever hear anything more of the lady?’

For answer the Coastguard man pulled out a plain massive gold watch. ‘I had this come, two or three weeks after, sir,’ he said. ‘Captain Singleton sent for me one day, and gave it me. He said it came from the mother of the young gentleman I’d found. It’s a splendid watch to go, sir.’

‘It’s one of Benson’s hunters,’ said Harrie, examining it. ‘You’ll never wear that out, my man.’

‘I suppose not, sir. Do you see that yacht, sir? I’ve been watching her this long time. She’s putting off a boat for shore; and there’s one of our men going down to the pier to meet it. We took some brandy the other day on a yacht.’

‘What was done with it?’

‘All thrown away, sir.’

‘That seems to me to be a most useless waste. What do they do it for?’

‘I’m blest if I know, sir! Better sell it, and give us the money. Good morning, sir.’





A MOTHER'S FAITH ;

OR,

HE WILL BRING BACK MY BOY.



MY boy has sailed, mother. Thou wilt miss him this time more than ever.'

'Ay, 'tis a sore miss,' answered the old woman, wiping the tears from her eyes. 'He was such a good lad, Paul ; thou and all the neighbours know what he has been to me. It was hard to let him go, but his mind was set on it, and I could not cross him. I'm watching the white sails of his ship ; look, she is only just in sight. Five minutes more, and my poor old eyes can't see her.'

'I wonder if she'll ever come back ! I always wonder and ask myself the question when I see a

ship sailing away to the great seas,' said Jeanne Pierrot, Paul's wife. 'I stood on this very spot and watched the *Virginie* out of sight, and she never came back. My boy, Jean Jacques, was in her, and he went down under the water out in the West yonder. Thy Victor is a fine lad, mother, but many as fine as he have——'

'Chut, chut,' interrupted Paul, 'thy tongue is too long, Jeanne. Go in and wash the potatoes and fry the fish, and don't stand here frightening the mother with thy tales. Never heed her, mother; thy lad stands as good a chance as any, and thou wilt have him home again before the next year's leaves fall from the trees. 'Tis a good ship.'

'Ay, 'tis a good ship,' repeated the old woman, straining her eyes to catch a last glimpse of the fast-fading sails. 'But all the same if she sinks—God will bring back my boy.'

The old man shook his head. 'It may be not, mother. He oftentimes takes our brave boys to Himself.'

'I know it, I know it, Paul; but He will bring back my boy.'

And so the good ship sailed away with the widow's only son on board; and the quiet calm of early autumn was succeeded by the rising of the winter's winds, and the fierce rage of winter's storms. Many a brave, good man trod the decks of *Le Bon Nom*, and many were the prayers offered for their speedy and safe return by their wives, and mothers, and children on shore. When the wild storms raged

round the lonely coast, and each day brought news of some fresh disaster at sea, then the cheeks grew pale with fear, and little children's eyes were filled with awe, whilst the prayers grew deeper and more earnest, and hearts were restless with a never-ceasing fear.

Still in the little cottage on the cliff the old mother waited with never-failing trust and faith. No wintry wind brought fear and trembling; no storm, however wild, brought paling cheek and tearful eye. 'Le bon Dieu will bring back my boy,' was ever on her lips, and the neighbours listened in wonder and silence.

'She speaks as if le bon Dieu had told her Himself,' whispered one. 'My Marie was up the cliff the other morn and heard her speaking, and went near, as children will, to listen, and the mother was talking to Him then. "God, Thou art great," she said, "and Thou art good! I can trust Thee ever. Thou dost rule the waters as well as the land, and my boy is safe with Thee. Thou wilt bring him home." And then the child said she began to sing, and stepped about as brisk and blithe as any young maid. She knows no fear.'

'No; because she trusts,' said young Thèrese, softly. 'I try to trust too, but when the wind blows round our house and shakes it from side to side, I cannot but think of Jules and fear.'

'My child, thou art young,' said Paul, kindly. 'When thou art old, thou wilt not hearken to the wind nor fear it.'

‘I shall always hearken and fear when Jules is out,’ she murmured. ‘Even if my hair is as gray as Mère Mèron’s. I will go and ask her why I cannot trust in le bon Dieu as she does.’

* * * * *

Out on the far-off seas a ship was lighting up with fatal fire the surrounding darkness. Fierce flames curled round and licked the masts and spars, till they fell seething and hissing into the dark waters below. The timbers glowed and cracked, and crumbled away; and there was no sound in the awful silence save that of the fell destroyer.

Higher and higher leaped the devouring flames, casting a ruddy glow upon the occupants of two small boats, which were fast hastening from the scene of destruction.

But the men rested on their oars, and a simultaneous cry of horror rose from their lips as a small, dark figure slowly crept along the bowsprit of the burning vessel.

‘It’s Victor! We forgot the boy!’ they cried, gazing into each other’s eyes with shuddering horror.

‘Back to the ship!’ said one, hoarsely.

‘We cannot! The mast is falling! It will be our death!’ they answered, and even as they spoke the sound of a heavy crash was heard, as it fell into the seething sea.

Then there was a blaze of light, and a long flame licked the bowsprit with eager, blasting tongue.

Round, and round again it curled, burning to the very heart of the iron-hard wood.

‘Mon Dieu! The poor Victor! He is lost!’ they cried, and tears rose to eyes that had long been strangers to them: tears for the fate of the bright young life; and strong men bowed in the presence of that awful death.

‘What will his mother say?’ murmured Jules, his thoughts flying to the peaceful little cottage on the Cliff in the old home village. ‘We were men, we should have looked after the boy!’

‘It is too late for repentance! The lad is gone. How could we tell he was not in the other boat?’ answered one.

‘Nay, but we ought to have looked. It will never be too late for repentance! The lad was in our charge.’

A shout from the other boat fell upon their ears, and its crew, with a loud cheer, pulled hard towards the burning ship.

‘What is it? what are they doing?’ cried Jules. ‘Ah, I see! It is the boy; it is Victor! Pull, my friends; pull for a life! he is swimming. Courage, Victor! Courage!’

The cry rang over the waters, stimulating the failing powers of the boy to fresh exertions. ‘Courage!’ echoed the men from the other boat, while they pulled as they had never pulled before.

‘Safe, safe!’ cried Jules, flinging himself overboard, and catching the exhausted boy in his arms. ‘Thank God for this!’

‘Le bon Dieu!’ whispered the boy. ‘My mother said He’d take care of me. She will rejoice. Le bon Dieu!’

* * * * *

‘Art looking for *Le Bon Nom*, mother? Thou art ever here.’

‘I love the spot, Paul. It is dear to me for my boy’s sake.’

‘Dost thou not fear, mother? ’Tis long since the ship was due; men fear they will never see her again.’

‘I do not fear,’ was the tranquil reply. ‘God will bring back my boy.’

There was weeping in the little village that night, and breaking hearts; for the news came of a ship seen burning at night on the still, dark ocean, and a board picked up, bearing the name ‘*Le Bon Nom*.’ Little children sobbed themselves to sleep, murmuring the dear name of ‘father!’ Gray-haired mothers sat rocking themselves to and fro in their childless anguish, and young wives wrapped themselves round with the unutterable bitterness of a life-long sorrow.

Still in the little cottage on the cliff a faithful, trusting heart waited on in hope.

‘Thou dost not shed a tear! Thy Victor is dead,’ said Jeanne Pierrot. ‘Thou dost not expect him to rise from the sea?’

‘He is not dead; he will come back. God will bring back my boy.’

‘Tush!’ said Jeanne, impatiently, ‘thou dost ever

talk of le bon Dieu! He will not give thy boy life again!’

‘She is mad,’ said the neighbours, pityingly, shrugging their shoulders. ‘The poor mother! it has turned her brain!’

And so the days passed on, and autumn again lengthened into winter. From early dawn to dark a silvery-haired old woman watched for a coming ship. And at last it came.

‘What is it, mother? What dost thou want?’ asked the men down by the little quay. ‘Thy son! nay, thou art dreaming! he is dead.’

But the boat drew nearer, and a loud shout awoke the slumbering echoes of the cliffs.

‘What is it? What has happened?’ asked the women, crowding to their doors.

‘It is Victor—it is my boy. Le bon Dieu has brought back my boy,’ came the tranquil answer, and then rose an answering cry from the shore as wife recognised husband, and mother, son, and little children shouted with glee to see *father* once more.

‘Le bon Dieu has brought me back to thee, mother,’ said the boy, folding his arms round his mother’s neck. ‘I trusted Him all the time.’

‘Trusted Him!’ she echoed, smoothing back his curly hair with her trembling hands. ‘Ay, I trusted Him, too! I knew He’d bring back my boy.’



CONDEMNED TO BE SHOT.



HERE is a letter from Winthrop at last, mother, but my eyes are getting so dim, I cannot see a word. Read it and see what the boy has got to say for himself.'

'I cannot take my hands out of the dough, Paul. Call the child, she will read it to us gladly.'

Paul Vernon walked to the door and looked out. The child, as they always called their little daughter, was sitting on a gate watching the men at work in the yard. The sunlight was falling full on the soft brown hair and little listlessly-folded hands, and the picture would have been a pretty one to other than a father's eyes.

'Faith, thy mother wants thee, child. Come quick.'

There was no hurry in the little maiden's movements. Quickly, but with all her mother's quiet gentleness of manner, she followed her father into the cool, pleasant kitchen.

'A letter from Winthrop, my child. Come and read it to thy father and me. Thou wilt have to be our eyes now that we are getting old.'

'She has been her father's eyes this many a long day,' said Paul, lifting her on his knee. 'Now, little maid, let us hear what news thy brother sends us.' And the child read:

"My Mother—I do not know how to write to you, I do not know how to tell you! And yet you must know. Do not think hardly of me, your boy has not been disloyal to his country. Mother, I am to be shot"—'

'Faith!' broke from the mother's lips in a sharp, agonized cry, and all the colour faded from the child's face, as she sat with eyes rivetted on the paper. 'I am to be shot,' she repeated in a low undertone.

'Child, art thou blind!' cried Paul, taking the letter from her unresisting hands. 'Where are my glasses. I will read it myself. Never fear, mother, the child cannot read Winthrop's writing: he had always a queer hand. Where is it, Faith?'

'Give it me, I will read it myself. I can always read my boy's letters,' and, with trembling hands, Mary Vernon took the paper.

I am to be shot! Everything else faded. There

they stood, those five little words in bold relief. All else seemed a blank, and the mother's heart stood still.

'There must be some mistake! Read on, mother, or give it to the child and let her read. It cannot be true!'

'Of course it isn't true!' cried the mother, passionately. 'I cannot read it, the words all run into one another. Take it, Faith.'

"I would not let any one else tell you, though many have offered to write. I wanted to tell you all about it myself. I have slept at my post, and the penalty is death. Carl, my comrade, was ill, and I went on duty for him; the next night he was no better, and I went again and fell asleep. I was doing double work—my own and Carl's—and it was too much for me. I do not want you and father and little Faith to think I have wilfully disgraced you, so I tell you the truth. I am no traitor to my country. I would lay down my life for it, if needs be. I would fight to the last, under the dear old flag, but I could not help falling asleep that night—and now my life is over. It is no use hoping, dear mother. There are to be no more reprieves; the people have risen against them, and forced the President to say he will grant no more. They say he is too merciful, and will ruin the army, and he has yielded to them. Good-bye, my mother. I would like to have seen the old home once more. I would like to have walked once more round the dear familiar farm. I long to shake my father's hand,

and feel my mother's arms around me before I die. Will you come? Tell little Faith her brother sees her in his dreams. Last night, I dreamed she was sitting by me with her hand in mine, and I tried to tell her I was going to be shot, but could not; my tongue seemed tied. What will she say, I wonder? Don't trouble about me, mother. I shall die without fear. I sit and think of it, and try to fancy the hereafter, and there is light beyond. Come to me, if you can, you and my father, and bring Faith with you."

Steadily the child read the words, and then came voices and footsteps from without. Another soldier lad had written to his village home, with the news of Winthrop Vernon's fate, and the simple, kindly, New England folks came up at once to speak their sympathy and sorrow, for the boy Winthrop was known and loved. But speech failed them in the presence of the parents' wordless grief, and the women, in woman-fashion, sat and wept in silence, and the men grasped Paul's hand, and then passed out into the golden sunlight, not knowing how or what to speak.

And the child Faith fled from the sound of human voice, and hid in the old barn, and buried her head in the fragrant hay. And the blythe birds twittered among the old brown beams, the sleepy cat purred and rubbed its sleek head against her arm, the little kittens ran over her, and patted her head with soft, velvety paws, and made darts and springs at her dark brown hair, and her pet doves bowed and cooed,

but she neither saw nor heard, for *Winthrop was going to be shot.*

In the silent night Winthrop Vernon sat alone with his head bowed upon his folded arms. Sleep! how could he sleep when life was slowly, slowly, minute by minute, ebbing away? Only a few more days and nights on earth for him! only a few more radiant sunsets, a few more starry nights! And his thoughts had gone to the dear old homestead. What were they doing now? They had not got his letter yet. They were sleeping, of course; what should keep them awake? Then in the morning, what then? His father would go out on the farm, would lean over the gate and chat with the passers-by, would talk of his boy out yonder, serving his country. And his mother, what of her? She would go about her household duties in her usual gentle way; speaking in motherly tones to the village children bringing their cans for milk. And Faith, with her grave little face and the serious eyes he knew so well, would feed her doves and chickens, and help her mother to wash the old-fashioned china, and send many a thought to the distant camp where 'brother Winthrop' was lying in his loneliness, waiting for the fatal hour. His letter would reach them before sunset, what would they do then? Would it break his mother's heart? 'God help her!' cried the boy with quivering lips; 'I know it will break her heart! my good mother!' O, it was hard to die so young! to leave all the pleasant, happy land with its wealth of buoyant life, and lie

down beneath the cool, green grass. It was hard to say good-bye to the dear ones at home, and look his last in the eyes that were ever brimming over with love for him. And hardest of all to die such a death! To be shot down like a dog because he had failed to do his duty, to keep faith with his country! That was truly the bitterness of death! Disgrace on the time-honoured name; disgrace that no years could efface.

‘Winthrop Vernon shot for disloyalty to his country!’

* * * * *

‘Is this the President’s house?’

The sentinel looked down with a smile into the child’s dark eyes. ‘Yes, this is where the President lives—what of it?’

‘Can I see him?’

‘See Abraham Lincoln? What does such a little maid want with the President?’

‘I am Faith Vernon,’ answered the child, folding her hands tightly on her breast, as if to still the wild beating of her heart. ‘My brother, Winthrop, is condemned to be shot, and I want to see the President.’

‘What has thy brother done?’

‘He went on duty for his comrade, and fell asleep.’

‘Child,’ said the man, compassionately, ‘it is no use to see the President; he has said there shall be no more reprieves.’

‘But if I tell him all about it! O, let me see him.’

‘It will but give thee pain; the President will refuse.’

‘Nay,’ entreated the child, in the quaint, old-fashioned speech she had learned from her parents, ‘it will not pain me. I would tell him that my mother’s heart is breaking. Thou wilt not stop me?’

‘Stop a child on such an errand; not I,’ muttered the sentinel, drawing back, and Faith passed on. More than once she was stopped and questioned, but as she told her story those who stopped her let her pass, and at last she reached the President’s room.

‘Art thou Abraham Lincoln?’

At the sound of the childish, serious voice, the senators paused and listened.

‘I am Abraham Lincoln. What can I do for you, my child?’ answered the President, taking the little hand in his.

‘Wilt thou save my brother?’

‘Who is your brother, and what has he done?’

Again and again the child essayed to speak, but the words refused to come. Her heart beat loudly and rapidly, and a thick mist gathered before her eyes. Making a desperate effort, she took her brother’s letter from the bosom of her frock, and placed it in Abraham Lincoln’s hand, and he read it. And as he read it, large tears gathered in his eyes and rolled silently down his face, for he had a loving, gentle heart.

‘Are you little Faith?’ he asked at last; and she answered, ‘Yes.’

‘My child, do you know that when a soldier fails in his duty, he must be shot?’

‘But it was not his own duty,’ pleaded the child, with tightly-clasped hands; ‘my brother is true and loyal to his country, and would lay down his life for it. If thou dost not save him it will break our mother’s heart!’

And the good President bowed his head in sore perplexity. Had he not said there should be no more reprieves? and yet how could he let the boy die?

‘Thou wilt not let him die,’ whispered Faith, laying her folded hands on his knee. ‘I know thou wilt save him.’

But if he gave the boy his life, what would the people say?

‘*I know* thou wilt save him,’ repeated the child, gathering confidence and hope.

‘Faith by name and faith by nature,’ he said, lifting up his head. ‘God bless you, my little girl, your brother shall live.’

And the child’s eyes brimmed over with gladness, and gratitude, and love, and with instinctive grace she bent and kissed his hand.

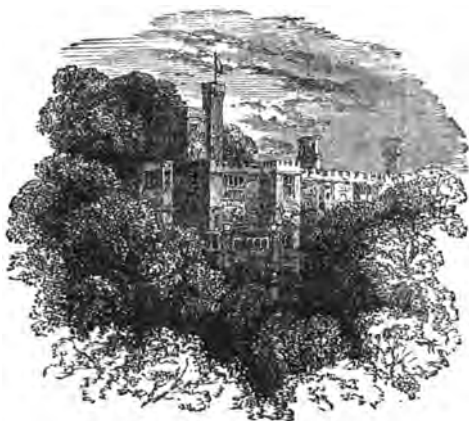
‘I knew that good Abraham Lincoln would save my brother,’ she cried, triumphantly. ‘I knew it, though the soldier said he would not.’

* * * * *

Once more in the dear old homestead. Father

and mother, brother and sister, for good Abraham Lincoln not only gave the boy his life but sent him home with a thirty days' furlough. And there were gladness and rejoicing in the quiet village ; the old men and women, the young men and maidens, crowded up to the farm to shake hands with the boy who had been restored to them. And when they left in the tranquil starlight, there rose a shout which startled the birds in their leafy nests, and echoed back from the surrounding hills :

‘ Long live good Abraham Lincoln ! ’





THE GOLDEN WEDDING IN HEAVEN.



FIFTY years to-morrow! It is a long time, Dorothy. Dost thou remember the wedding-day?'

'Remember it, dear heart!'

'Ay, thou art not likely to forget. It was a lovely day,' continued the old man, dreamily. 'The air was laden with the fragrance of the sweet May blossom, and the sun was shining on hill and dale. We walked to church through the apple-orchard and pine-wood. I can smell the pines now. How cool it was in the shade, how hot in the merry sunshine. We stopped on the bridge and listened to the little brook chattering away over the smooth round pebbles. Ah me, I was a young man then, young, and handsome, and strong. And thou wert but

nineteen, and the prettiest maiden in the dales. But I love thy face better now, dear wife and true. Thy silver hair is dearer to me than the bonny curls I loved so well, and thy voice has even more of the music of heaven than when it first thrilled my heart with gladness. Fifty long years! Thank God for them all, and each. We have had our share of trouble, Dorothy, but "taking the years together, there's not more cloud than sun." It was a sore trouble to lose our bonnie wee Willie, with his winsome ways, but God sent Alec before the grass was green on the little grave, and thy mother's heart had somewhat on which to expend its wealth of love. Then came father's own girl, our little May, to steal into our hearts and make glad once more the old home with her pretty baby ways. Dost remember how proud I was of our little daughter? Not five summers had passed over her golden head, when the sturdy twins, Archie and Gordon, came to see what sort of a world it was below; and last of all came our little white flower, our fragile, delicate Hope. We did not keep her long. Only ten short years, and then she went to find Willie among the angels. Those were her last words. Did she find him, think you, Dorothy? Ay, I doubt it not. Then May married, and we did not like her husband. We would not say her nay, but we never liked him. And she found out her mistake, and faded away before the spring came round again. We laid her in the old churchyard with her baby in her arms. One by one they left us. Brave Alec fighting in a

foreign land; Gordon cut down in his manhood by the fatal fever; Archie, ah! that was the worst of all, years of wandering, an outcast on the face of God's beautiful earth. Years of sin and shame. And yet he came home at last. He died in your arms, dear wife, and he was the last. All gone! all waiting for thee and me up above. Shall we know them? Willie and Hope were but children when they went home; they must be altered now. It is growing very dark. Draw aside the curtains, Dorothy. Now come and sit by me, and give me thy hand.'

Slowly fell the evening shadows on the quiet land. Through the open window came the perfume of the sweet May blossom, and every now and then the low trill of the nightingale fell on the silent air. Hand in hand the old man and his wife watched the shining out of the stars, till a countless number gemmed the clear sky.

'Fifty years to-morrow! It will be our golden wedding-day, Alec. Dost thou remember how the children used to talk of it? They promised us they would all come home and celebrate it. "If I'm in America, I'll come," Alec said; and they all agreed that no distance should keep them from us. It was the week before Hope died, and I remember well the look thou didst give me when she cried, "And I'll come too, father!" She was lying in thy arms, with her little hands clasped round thy neck, and thou didst say, "So thou shalt, if God wills it, little one." But we knew He would not will it.

Yes, He has taken them all! our bonny lads and winsome lasses. We will keep the day together, thou and I, and may-be some day we shall know that the children were near us, though we saw them not. The neighbours smile when we speak of the children, for they think only of the bearded men. But they are always the children to thee and me, Alec.

‘Fifty years! Ay, it is a long time, and we have seen much of evil and good. But thou hast ever been tender and true to me, Alec. I thought I loved thee when first we wandered by the elders and pictured our happy future, and I looked with pride on thy stalwart strength. But the love of the young wife is very different from that of the old. I have tried thee and proved thee, and thou hast stood the test. Thou hast made me a proud and happy wife all these long years, Alec. We have had our share of trouble, God knows, but I could bear them when I had thy strength to lean upon. Dear heart, I have but one wish now, that He Who has given thee to me, and me to thee, all these fifty years, will not separate us for long at the last. It may be that thou wilt go first, and then thou wilt wait at the gates for me, thou and the children. Or it may be that I shall go first, but I shall be loth to enter the City without thee.

‘Ah, many a time I’ve pictured to-morrow. I thought we should have our children and our children’s children round us. Dost thou remember my father’s and mother’s golden wedding? Our

boys were all home then, but May was dead. We were all there, Mary, and Ellen, and James, and their boys and girls, and it was a happy day. As we walked home over the new-mown grass, the boys talked of the grand presents they would bring us on our golden wedding.

‘Canst thou not sleep a little? I will not talk to thee, and then perhaps thou wilt.’

‘Nay, I am not sleepy, but for thy sake I will try to rest. The morning will come all the sooner. And dost thou truly love me better than in the happy days of youth? I believe it, Dorothy. Deeper, and stronger, and more like the love above, is the love I bear for thee, and thou for me. These fifty years have drawn us very close together, and I do not think the God of Heaven will part us for long now. The sun of our lives is setting, Dorothy, but only to rise and shine on the other side, where the children are. Old, and feeble, and gray! Ay, so we are to mortal eye. Only waiting His pleasure to say farewell to the green fresh earth. ’Tis a bonny world after all, dear wife, but it’s a bonnier above; and besides, it is home there, and I am longing to see it.’

‘Patience a little longer, Alec. Please God it will not be very long before we go. And we shall gather round the throne, thou, and I, and the children; and there will be no more parting. See how the moon shines through the leaves. ’Twas just such a night when Archie died; so still and light. Dost thou hear the rippling of the brook?

I think the wind is rising, for I hear the leaves rustle.'

'Not more cloud than sun, not more night than day,' murmured the old man. 'Thank God for the sun and day. Thank God for thee, dear wife. Thank God for all.'

* * * * *

And the morning sun rose and shone on the young spring flowers and waving trees, and touched the rippling brook with a silver light. And the glad birds awoke to song, and all nature spoke of the great Artist's hand, but in the little chamber—silence, and quiet rest. The sunbeams played at will on the folded hands and snow-white hair, and the bees hummed through the open window. But the old man and Dorothy lay motionless and still.

'They are sleeping,' whispered a neighbour. No, not sleeping, but gone to keep their golden wedding with the children.





THE LITTLE SCOTTISH MARTYRS.

A TALE OF THE COVENANTERS.



Y the side of a brawling mountain stream stood a bonnie Scottish lassie, with glinting hair, and bare, brown legs, and laughing eyes. Poised on one foot, she touched the water lightly with the other, and then drew back with an affectation of alarm.

‘It’s cauld, Donald, and it’s deep,’ she cried, with a merry laugh. ‘Winna ye lift me across?’

‘Deed nae ; gin ye canna come yersel’, ye maun gang hame,’ answered Donald, from the opposite bank.

‘Weel, gin I maun, I maun.’ And with a dash and a splash the little lassie crossed the stream, and stood by her brother’s side.

‘Donald, luik,’ she exclaimed, laying her hand on the boy’s arm. ‘Canna ye see—’

But the boy’s hand was on her mouth, and the words arrested. ‘Whist, Mysie, it’s the sodgers.’

Up the mountain pass came the glittering bayonets, and before the children could gain the shelter of the underwood, the open space by the stream was filled with armed men.

‘Min’ ye dinna tell them onything; be a brave lassie, Mysie,’ whispered the lad, putting on a bold front. ‘They winna hurt ye.’

‘Here, boy,’ cried one of the foremost men, in a tone of authority, ‘have you seen any one pass this way, this morning?’

‘No mony folk pass this way,’ answered Donald, evasively.

‘No, perhaps not,’ said the soldier, significantly; ‘but one has passed, and that not an hour ago. Bring the boy here,’ he added, turning to the men; and two of them seized the lad, and forced him to the horse’s side.

‘Have you seen the man I speak of?’

‘What like was he?’ asked the boy, with a warning glance at Mysie.

‘The cub knows him,’ said one of the men behind. ‘Robert Brock has been to his father’s house often enough.’

‘Do you know Robert Brock?’ asked the officer.

‘I ken him for a gude mon, who never did onybody harm,’ replied the boy, bravely.

‘Well, then, which road did he take when he passed here?’

‘I canna tell.’

‘Did you see him?’

‘Ay, I saw him.’

‘Then which road did he take?’

‘What for do ye want him?’

‘To send a bullet through his head, as I will send one through yours if you don’t answer,’ was the brutal reply, and the boy turned pale.

‘Ye may send a bullet through my heid gin ye like, but I’ll no tell ye which way Robert Brock went. He’s the Lord’s servant.’

‘Try the girl; she’ll tell us fast enough,’ suggested one who had not spoken before; and a soldier grasped the child’s delicate wrist, and drew her forward.

‘Dinna ye tell them, Mysie,’ cried Donald, as she passed him; but a heavy hand fell on his mouth with cruel force, and checked the words.

‘Now, child,’ said the officer, slowly, ‘which way went this saintly man of God?’

She cast a frightened look at Donald, who answered with a cheering smile as he wiped the blood from his swollen lips.

‘I canna tell ye, sir.’

‘Will not, you mean. Did he take the right or left road?’

‘I dinna ken—I mean I ken, but I winna tell.’

‘Then I must find some way to make you tell.’

Slowly the man’s strong fingers closed round the

little wrist, twisting it till the child screamed with pain.

‘Now, will you tell?’

‘Donald, Donald, what maun I do?’ sobbed Mysie.

‘Lat her be!’ cried the boy, fiercely. ‘Lat her be, ye black-hearted coward!’

‘I’ll let her be when she has answered my question.’

‘Dinna ye answer, Mysie.’

‘Silence,’ said a soldier, savagely; ‘leave the child alone.’

‘Donald, he hurts me sair,’ sobbed Mysie.

‘Will you tell?’

‘I canna.’

Again the brutal hold tightened on the delicate arm, and the tortured child sank on the greensward in an agony of pain and fear.

Wresting himself from the grasp of the soldier, Donald sprang forward and lifted her up, his eyes blazing with indignant wrath.

‘It’s brave work for men,’ he cried with bitter contempt, ‘to hurt such a wee bit lassie! My bonnie, brave Mysie! dinna greit. I’ll take ye hame.’

The child clung to him convulsively. ‘Dinna lat them touch me, Donald! Tak me hame to my mither.’

‘Ay, that will I, Mysie; dinna greit,’ said the boy, soothingly.

‘Not just yet, my lad,’ said the officer, with a smile, ‘I’m going to know which way Robert Brock went first.’

‘Then ye maun gang to them as ’ll tell ye, for I winna,’ was the brave reply.

‘Take the child away from him,’ said the officer, peremptorily.

‘Nae, nae, Donald ! dinna lat them tak me awa,’ screamed Mysie.

But what was the strength of the boy against that of the stalwart man ? Roughly they unclasped the child’s hands and dragged her away.

‘Is she your sister ?’ asked the officer of Donald.

‘Ay, my ain sister, an’ gin ye lat her be, I dinna care what ye do till me.’

‘Will you let her tell me what I ask, or will you tell me yourself ?’

‘I winna help ye ta fin’ good Robert Brock.’

‘Set the child against that stump.’

With his heart beating almost to suffocation, Donald watched them. What were they going to do to Mysie ? Surely they would not really hurt such a wee bairn ! They were men, not fiends.

‘Now, my boy, once more. Which way went the godly Robert Brock ?’

‘Gin ye tear my tongue out I winna tell ye.’

‘Fire.’

A wreath of blue smoke floating away towards the bluer heavens ! A mass of fair hair dabbled in blood ! A little white face on the green, green grass.

With a cry of horror, the boy threw himself beside the still little form.

‘Mysie, Mysie, speak ! it’s yer ain brither, Donald !’

But the life had gone out for ever from the happy blue eyes! The silence of death was on the parted lips.

‘Throw the child into the stream,’ came the cold inexorable command, and in a moment the pure waters blushed in God’s sunlight with the blood of an innocent life.

‘For the last time. Which way went Robert Brock?’

‘Fin’ out,’ replied the dauntless boy, ‘ye have shot my bonnie wee sister, and now ye may shoot me, but I’ll never help ye wi’ yer black work! God will take care o’ Robert Brock.’

‘It’s an easy thing to talk of dying, boy,’ said the officer.

‘I’d rather gang to heaven wi’ clean han’s than stain them wi’ the blood o’ God’s servant and live!’

‘Once.’

Steadfast and calm was the brave, young face, silent the firm, young lips.

‘Speak, thou young fool!’ cried one of the soldiers roughly, ‘dost think we shall not catch Robert Brock? Thy silence does but delay his death an hour or so. Save thy life and speak.’

‘I canna stain my han’s wi’ blood.’

‘Twice.’

The fair, green, smiling earth below, the high arched heaven above, the broad stream murmuring over its rocky bed, the sweet-voiced birds making glad the morning air, all nature bright, and pure,

and beautiful, speaking of goodness and love to ears that heard not, to seared and cruel hearts.

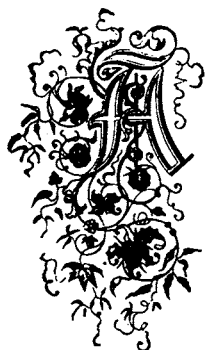
‘Thrice. *Fire.*’

Once more the curling smoke! Once more the blood-stained turf! Down the mountain side pressed the soldiers, eager for their prey, and the waters flowed calmly on over the silent dead. Up, toward the clear, blue sky was turned the proud young face of the murdered boy, and the fair hair of his ‘bonnie wee sister’ floated over his bare, brown breast. And only the crimsoned wave and deep-dyed turf bore witness of the cruel deed; but God and the holy angels watched over the lonely resting-place of the little Scottish martyrs.





THE LIGHTHOUSE KEEPER.



ARE you going out again to-night, father?’

‘Yes; I promised to see Dowland about those nets. I shall not be long.’

‘It is going to be a roughish night, I think; the wind is rising fast. I wish you wouldn’t go out, father.’

‘I sha’n’t be long, I tell you. If you are lonely, I’ll send Jane Peters in to you.’

‘I’m not lonely, father; it isn’t that.’

‘What is it, then?’ said Hessel, somewhat roughly. ‘You don’t suppose I shall come to any harm, do you? Get your book and read, and don’t think about me.’

‘But the path along the cliff is very dangerous in

the dusk. I cannot help fearing a little. If you would only promise ——'

Half fearfully the girl paused, and looked wistfully at her father.

'I shall promise nothing,' he answered, doggedly. 'You mind your own business, and leave me to mind mine. I know what I'm about.'

'Father, last night you did not know what you were about.'

With a muttered oath Hessel walked across the room and flung open the door. It was a dull, cold autumn evening, and the sea looked heavy and gray. Overhead the clouds were being driven rapidly along by the rising wind, and the waves below were beginning to break upon the rocks with an ominous sound. Mary Hessel rose from her seat and limped, with the aid of her crutches, to the little window.

'Is there going to be a storm, do you think, father?' she asked, anxiously.

'Not much of one to-night; it's coming up, though.'

'I wonder where Edward is now. He'll be passing in a day or two. I hope he'll get home before the heavy storms come on.'

The man's face softened as he swept the horizon with his glass. Edward was his only son, and the only one on earth he really loved. The poor cripple girl he tolerated, but that was all. Some people said he disliked her, but that was not true, and she knew it.

'The lad has been gone a long time, nigh upon

ten months, Mary,' he said, with a smile. 'I reckon he'll be altered.'

'Taller and browner, he says,' replied the girl. 'He'll be as tall as you, father, I expect.'

'Ay, he was always a fine lad. Don't you come to the door, Mary, it's too cold for you.'

'Father, if you won't promise for my sake, will you for Edward's?' Great tears stood in Mary Hessel's eyes as she laid her hand beseechingly upon his arm, and he looked down upon her for a moment irresolute.

'What's the matter with you to-night, Mary?'

'I don't know, father. I only know that I can't bear to think of your going to "The Anchor" to-night. Won't you stay at home?'

'I tell you I must go down to Dowland's; I shall want the nets to-morrow.'

'Then will you come straight home after? I cannot help it, father, but I have such a fear on me.' And leaning her head against the door she burst into tears.

'Come, stop that. What in the world do you think is going to happen?'

'I don't know. O, father! if you would but promise this once.'

'Well,' replied Hessel, reluctantly, 'I don't care just this once. Mind you, I won't do it again; but as you're so nervous, I'll come straight home from Dowland's.'

He went off, and, after watching him out of sight,

Mary returned to the window, which overlooked the sea.

Down in the village the fishermen, lounging at their doors, talked over the events of the day, the quantity and quality of the fish taken, and the probabilities of further good hauls on the coming morrow. On a low stone wall, in front of one of the cottages, old Dowland sat mending nets, and Hessel sat down by his side.

‘I’ve come after my nets,’ he said; ‘I must have them to-morrow morning.’

‘You can have them to-night, if you like, they are ready. You’ll be looking out for Ned in a day or two, won’t you? It’s most time he was home.’

‘He’ll pass the point to-morrow, I expect, or the day after.’

‘You’ll be glad to see the lad, Hessel?’

‘Ay, that I shall. He’s been gone a long time. There’s a storm coming up; look at yon dark line.’

The clouds grew thicker and blacker, and at last heavy drops of rain began to fall, and the gossiping groups dispersed.

‘Aren’t you coming up, Hessel?’ asked one of the men, as Hessel turned towards his home.

‘No, not to-night; I told my girl I’d be back soon; she’s nervous up there by herself, poor thing.’

‘One glass won’t keep you long; come on, for the sake of company.’

But Hessel shook his head, and walked on. At the foot of the cliff he paused and looked back. The lights were shining in the windows of “The

Anchor," and his busy fancy pictured the cheerful room with the social company and only too welcome drink.

'I've a good mind to go back,' he muttered. 'I needn't stay long, and it's dull enough at home.'

Stronger and stronger grew the temptation, weaker and weaker the memory of his promise.

'Why shouldn't I go?' he argued; 'it's nonsense to stay away because of a girl's nervous fears. I needn't stay long. I *will* go.'

He turned and walked rapidly back, and in a few minutes was in his accustomed place.

Swiftly the shades of night drew round, and at last one of the men called to him.

'Hessel, it's time you lit your lamps.'

He rose and went out, but the influence of the drink was upon him, and the craving for more was strong and resistless. Stopping at the bar, he called for a bottle of whisky. 'I like a drop hot before I turn in at night,' he said, as they gave it him.

As he neared the lighthouse he paused. No one was in sight, and the intense longing for another taste could not be overcome. Deeper and deeper he drank of the fiery draught, and with fatal fascination it lured him on till he fell beneath its power.

* * * * *

In the lonely lighthouse Mary Hessel sat watching the gathering storm. One by one the vessels disappeared, till not a sail was to be seen, and not one sign of human life remained. The village was completely hidden from view in the valley, and no

cheerful cottage light shone out for her in the gloom. As the daylight faded she went to the door to look for her father, but it grew darker and darker, and yet he did not come.

‘Had he broken his promise?’ she wondered, ‘had he gone after all to that wretched “Anchor?” What were the men thinking of that they did not send him home? Surely they knew it was getting dark, and that the lighthouse lamps were not lit! What were they all thinking of?’

Still the rain fell faster, and the wind rose higher, and the breakers dashed with foam and noise on the rocks below.

‘It would be quite dark in an hour, or even less, and if the lamps were not lighted, who knew what might happen? Father had never been so late before! Why didn’t he come?’ But it was in vain to question and watch; there was no one to answer.

‘If only they could see the lighthouse from the village, some of them might wonder where the lights were, and come to see;’ but the village lay in the valley, out of sight.

Slowly passed the dreary minutes, and a thick darkness gradually fell on sea and land. With a sinking heart the girl turned from her fruitless watch and closed the door. Shivering in every limb, she heaped wood on the little fire, and lighting all her small stock of candles, placed them in the window, hoping to cast one ray of light on the troubled waters.

Suddenly the door opened, and with staggering

steps her father entered. Throwing his hat upon the table, he sank heavily into his arm-chair without one look or word to the frightened girl.

‘Father!’ she cried, ‘it is quite dark and the lamps are not lighted! Will you go and light them?’

But he took no heed of her words.

‘Father! what if any vessels are passing! they will strike on the rocks and be lost, and it will be our fault!’

The fire-light flickered and played on the rough beard and weather-beaten face, but still Hessel sat motionless.

Driven to desperation, the girl limped across, and laying her weak hand on his shoulder strove to shake him back to consciousness. ‘Father, they will call it murder! do you hear? Dear father, do rouse yourself and light the lamps, and then you can go to bed and sleep! I would do it if I could climb the ladder, but you know I can’t. Father!’

The heavy eyes opened and looked at her with vacant, meaningless expression.

Seizing a glass of water from the table, she held it eagerly to his lips. ‘Drink a drop, father, it will clear your head,’ she said, with trembling hope.

At the sight of the glass his eyes brightened, but as the cold pure water touched his feverish lips he dashed it to the ground with an oath, and again his head sank upon his breast in the dull stupor of intoxication.

Sinking on her knees on the cold floor, Mary

Hessel cried aloud in her anguish. 'O, God! what will become of the poor men who are on the water to-night?'

The storm came on in all its fury. High up the rocky cliffs the giant breakers threw their spray, and the rough wind howled round the desolate lighthouse. There was 'woe upon the waters' that night, 'sounds of terror and affright!'

Once near the midnight hour came the sound of a gun, and the poor crippled girl's agony grew frantic. 'I would die, I would gladly die, if I could but light the lamp! O, God! what did I ever come into the world for? a poor helpless, useless cripple!'

Still Hessel slept on, and at last came the pale, gray dawn of day.

Cramped and aching in every limb, the girl rose and drew together the smouldering embers. The wild fury of the storm had spent itself, and in the lull of the wind she heard footsteps outside. An awful horror held her in rigid grasp! What were they coming for? To call her father by the name of *Murderer*. To drag him away to answer for the lives his hand had sent into the unseen world? To look upon him and her with stern and angry eyes?

The door opened softly, and with a shuddering gasp she hid her face in her hands.

'Mary.' There was no anger in the tone, only sorrow and commiseration. 'Mary, where is your father?'

She pointed silently to the sleeping form in the

arm-chair, and the old fisherman saw all in a glance.

‘My girl, there has been a fearful wreck on the rocks below this night,’ he whispered. ‘Many brave lads have gone to their long home. One—they are bringing *him* here.’

There was an awe in his eyes and a hush in his voice, and then Mary caught a glimpse of sorrowful, pitying faces, of a heavy burden borne by strong men.

‘Shall we bring *him* in?’ they whispered, and the old man gestured assent.

‘Bring who in? What is the matter?’ And roused by the noise of their entrance, Hessel rose and stood like a man in a dream.

Silently they laid the motionless form on the floor and drew back.

‘What are you bringing that dead man here for? Who is he?’

Were they all dumb that they did not answer? What right had they to bring their dead men there?

Hush! gently they drew the covering from the statuesque face and folded hands, reverently smoothed back the fair hair from the bronzed forehead, and Edward Hessel lay sleeping his last sleep beneath his father’s roof.

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